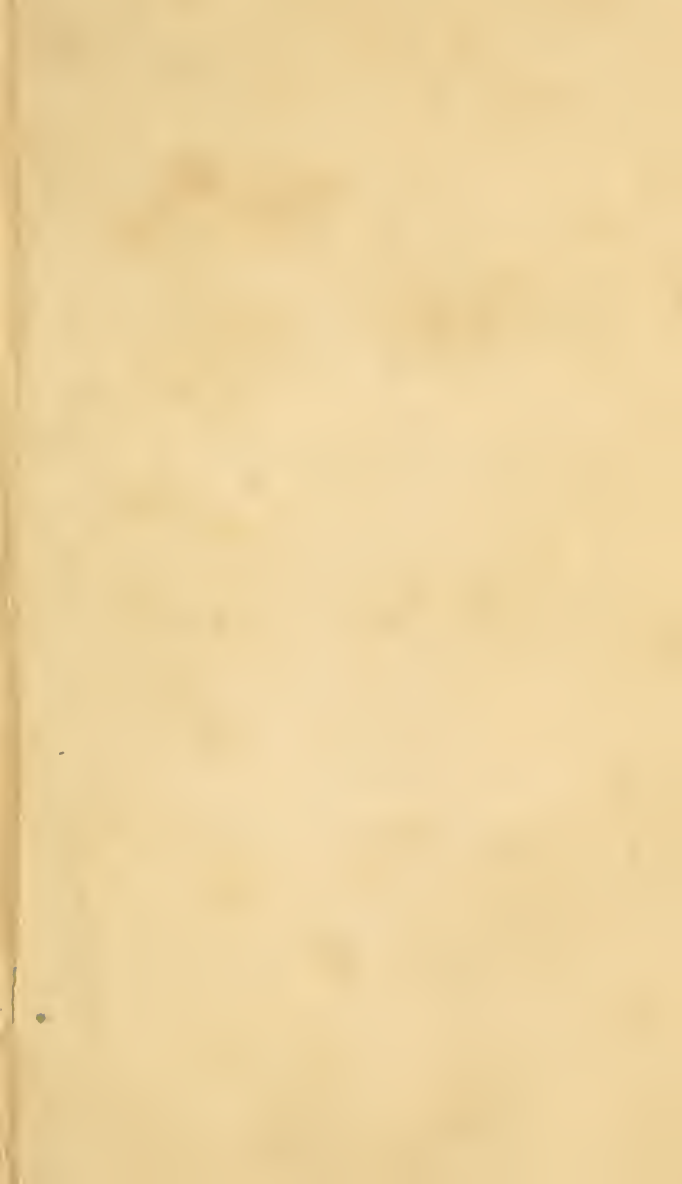




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THE
TRAGEDIES
OF
VITTORIO ALFIERI;

Translated from the Italian,

BY
CHARLES LLOYD.

SECOND EDITION.

To which is prefixed,

Memoirs of the Life and Writings of Alfieri.

IN FOUR VOLUMES.



VOL. III.

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ROSMUNDA.

A TRAGEDY.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

ALMÄCHILDE.

ROMILDA.

ILDOVALDO.

Soldiers.

ROSMUNDA.

Followers of Ildovaldo.

SCENE,—The Palace in Pavia.

ACT THE FIRST.

SCENE THE FIRST.

Rosmunda, Romilda.

Ros. Perfidious woman, put up to the skies
Thy unavailing vows; address to Heaven,
Which hears thee not, thy ineffectual prayers.
Meanwhile the sanguinary battle rages
On the Ticinus' shores; e'en to this place
I hear its clamour: nor in doubtful hope
Doth my heart waver: certainty of conquest
Do I infer from the high martial virtues
Of my new consort.

Rom. Yes, if in the camp
Thy Almachilde be as much distinguish'd,
As he himself distinguish'd in this palace,
Then when he sacrificed with trait'rous hand
My father Alboino, he will conquer:

But Clefi, who is now his adversary,
Does not now lie immersed in indolence,
Clasp'd in a guilty consort's arms, as lay
Thy husband Alboino on that night
Of memorable horrors. Round his standard
The noblest heroes Clefi hath collected :
He with his warriors doth at once maintain
The sacred cause of violated faith,
Of outraged heaven, of multitudes oppressed,
And of the infringed laws of Lombardy :
And fervently I pray for his success.

Ros. The dregs of Lombardy alone have flock'd
Round Clefi's mutinous standard ; he counts not
One man of noble blood among his followers :
Indeed, he well deserves that thou shouldst be
So strenuous in his cause. For art not thou
The daughter of a king ? Oh ! fortunate
My fate, in truth, that made me not thy mother !
Sprung from a monarch, canst thou entertain
The vile desire to see the royal power
Cast with the throne to earth ?

Rom. Upon the earth
Rather would I behold the throne, than fill'd
By a contaminating, guilty upstart.
The consort and the daughter of a king,
Say, wert not thou ? Thou, who hast dared to give
Thy hand in marriage to a trait'rous subject ?

Ros. To any man, that dared avenge my cause
This hand of mine was a due recompense.
I was constrain'd by dire necessity
To luckless nuptials with thy cruel father.
Yet reeking with the life-blood of Comundus,
My wretched father, Alboino gain'd me

Orphan and captive : the impious Alboino,
He that discomfited my partizans,
The spoiler of my patrimonial realm,
The insulter of my wretchedness. At length
From this inexorable fatal yoke,
'Neath which I languish'd for so many years,
I breathe. And now the rancour will burst forth
Which with so many conflicts I suppress'd :
Now thee, the abhorred child of Alboino,
(Of whom, for my especial happiness,
I'm not the mother,) I will banish thee
For ever from my sight. Thee I dispatch
A spouse to Alaric.

Rom. I ? . . . I the spouse
Of Alaric ?

Ros. Yes. This appears to thee
A small revenge, and small indeed I deem it,
When set against the injuries I endured
From Alboino : but it pleases me
Thus from my sight for ever to remove
The impious remnant of thy father's blood.
I, for the covenanted aid received
From Alaric against the troops of Clefi,
Have, to the former, pledged my royal faith,
As an equivalent, to yield thyself.
Exult : thou wilt have, as thou dost deserve,
A spouse magnanimous : and though a realm
Vast as the one usurp'd by Alboino,
The Eruli on Alaric bestow not,
Yet he assuredly may vie with him
In frantic cruelty. Thee, Alaric
Happy will make, as Alboin' made me.

Rom. Do not expect that I should ever yield

To nuptials dire as these. If thou'rt victorious,
And thirstest for a plenary revenge,
Amid these very walls (round which doth stray
The unavenged spectre of my father,
Where the vile traitor, by whose hands he fell,
Lies by thy side e'en in his very bed,)
The daughter thou shouldst immolate: and there
Opprobrious torments, and protracted pangs,
On her inflict. But thou presume to yield
My hand in marriage? . . .

Ros. Thou, with Alaric,
Wilt find the furies of a cruel step-dame
Join'd to the furies of a barbarous consort.
Those whom, at once, I fear and execrate,
With death I punish: thee, whom I fear not,
I would chastise with life.

Rom. Say, who can be
Thy rival in barbarity? Not I.
There are no tears, no cries of innocence,
That can thy bosom pierce: yet, save my tears,
I now have no defence . . . Oh Heaven! but no:
I can, and I know how to, ease myself
Of the intolerable load of life,
So that I go not to this destined marriage . . .
Perhaps 'twould be more expedient for me,
Bringing thy dagger, and thy noble arts,
To Alaric as a dowry, thus to make
My coveted alliance cost him dear:
But am I Rosamund?

Ros. I am; and feel
Proud in the consciousness that I am she.
The world knows well that I was not the first
To practise cruelty.

Rom. If towards thyself
My sire was cruel, rights of war produced
That cruelty ; but thou since . . .]

Ros. Rights of war ?
In the most cruel and inhuman clime,
Say, was it e'er a right, that impious rage
And sacrilegious scorn should violate
The unburied relics of the dead ? E'en now
Doth Alboino not before my eyes
For ever glare at that unnatural banquet,
(Banquet of death to me !) with pride, and blood,
And fury drunk, at his dire table placed,
Wantonly gibing ! Do not I behold him,
Sated with wine and beastly gluttony,
(Ah, horrid sight !) with a malicious coolness
Quaff his protracted and intemperate draughts
From my slain father's skull ? Then send to me,
Mantling with the abhorred beverage,
The execrable chalice ? In my ears
Doth not that scornful sanguinary challenge
Eternally reecho ? " Drink, Rosmunda ;
" Drink with thy father," tauntingly he cried.
And thou, from such a monster born, dost stand
Before my eyes ? If having first slain him,
I had suborned the vilest miscreants
First to contaminate, and then murder thee ;
If having burn'd your bodies, I had then
Scatter'd your ashes to the winds of Heaven,
Yea, even thus, I never had obtain'd
A vengeance equal to the wrongs I've suffer'd.
Go ; vex me now no more. 'Twill be to me
A grateful spectacle to see thee dragged,
Spite of thyself, to this abhorr'd alliance :

Now thou in vain resistest ; thou by force
Shalt go. Be other hands, rather than mine,
Polluted with thy blood. But, go meanwhile ;
I do not wish thee here, now I expect
My Almachilde conqueror from the camp.
Go ; and prepare thee by to-morrow's dawn
For thy departure : 'tis my will : obey.

SCENE THE SECOND.

Rosmunda.

Ros. How much I hate her not e'en I can tell . . .
There are sufficient reasons for this hatred ;
But it too nearly doth concern my peace
The cause most irrefragable and valid
Not to investigate. A dreadful doubt
Distracts my heart . . . But perhaps I am deceived . . .
Ah ! no ; there is no doubt ; the certainty
Is no less positive than desperate.
My consort, with those alienated looks,
Beholds her not, with which the murderer
Should contemplate the daughter of the murdered.
He speaks sometimes without aversion to her ;
And also speaks without aversion of her.
Perhaps by her false insinuating arts,
For I can ne'er impute it to her charms,
He is entangled ? . . . This suspicion never
Shall ripen into certainty. Far, far,
From hence, for ever be Romilda ; far . . .
At such a thought I feel my burning blood
Rush through each throbbing vein. Must I, in thee,
Oh Alboino's execrated child,
A rival also find ? Suspicion, hence . . .

Hither comes Almachilde . . . Let us see
Whether or not I am deceived.

SCENE THE THIRD.

Rosmunda, Almachilde, Soldiers.

Ros. Already the acclamatory shouts,
The festive banners waving to the wind,
And the demeanour of the stately ranks,
All, all proclaim it ; thou art conqueror.

Al. Saved, and secure, and victor, thou dost see
me ;

But not by my own prowess. Life and power,
Freedom and conquest, Ildovaldo only
Confers on me this day. He was my shield ;
He my magnanimous defender : he,
In my behoof, such proofs of valour gave
As far surpass my powers of recompense.

Ros. If I conjecture rightly, thy sublime,
Impetuous valour had impell'd thee thither
Where most the danger raged. Ah, little then,
Didst thou recall to mind the agonies,
The tears, the apprehensions of Rosmunda.
Thou know'st how much I fear'd thy too great va-
lour.

Yet in the promise which thou mad'st to me
Before the battle, not to expose thyself
Incautiously or vainly, I confided.
This I besought of thee ; and thou to me
Didst swear compliance ; ah ! what should I be,
'Tell me, bereft of thee ? My throne is nothing,
My life is nothing, if with thee not shared.

Al. Thee, and thy fondness, I recall'd to mind.

But I was forced, by bravely meeting death,
To shew myself Rosmunda's worthy spouse,
And worthy of the crown of Lombardy.
How could I, in the camp, save with my sword,
Make an atonement for that fatal blow
Wrought by my guilty hand?

Ros. What? dost thou dare
Profess repentance that thou hast avenged me?

Al. Ah, yes! 'Tis not the vengeance, but the
mode
By which that vengeance was obtain'd, that grieves
me:

And which I shall eternally regret.
To cleanse my character from such a stain,
I was compell'd, e'en to the latest drop,
With reckless prodigality, to spill
My tainted blood. I heard myself proclaim'd,
With fulminating vehemence, a traitor,
By Clefi and his heroes: I confess,
That to the centre of my guilty heart
The well-deserved, insufferable name
Resounded. I deny it not, that then,
Mindless of all except my impeach'd honour,
Where most the combatants and weapons thicken'd,
I fling myself: with unimaginable rage
Desperate, I wheel in circles my bright sword;
And with its trusty blade give ample proof
That I far less deserved the name of traitor
Than that of hero. Instantly around me,
Of slain, and of disabled warriors,
Mountains are piled: when my good charger falls,
Beneath my weight transfix'd; on earth I spring;
But on the ground, slippery with blood, my foot

Ill planted, slips, so that I fall again.
 Swiftly the hostile troops conglomerate,
 And with their strength collected rush on me.
 In vain my impotent and baffled sword
 Gives ill-aim'd proofs of its expiring prowess.
 When swifter than the lightening's vollied flash,
 'Mid troops, and spears, and shrieks, and swords,
 and blows,

With a few followers, Ildovaldo opens,
 E'en to my side, opens a fearful track.
 The assailants instantaneously disperse ;
 To right and left they fly ; in complete rout,
 Broken, they slink away. My followers
 Having resumed their courage, on their heels
 Press irresistibly ; their griding swords
 Obtain an ample harvest ; whence, at once,
 The uncertain fortune of the day is changed
 To overthrow, and universal carnage.

Ros. At length I breathe : at length thou'rt safe :
 I fear'd

No other obstacle to thy success
 Than that of thy imprudent hardihood.
 Already 'mid the chiefest of this realm
 Was Ildovaldo rank'd ; now will he be
 Second to none but thee.

Al. And towards him
 So much more grateful I am bound to be,
 E'en in proportion, as before the fight
 Some envious miscreants sought to render him
 By me the more suspected. He it was
 Whose foresight warn'd me not to trust the aid
 Of Alaric, long deferred, and haply faithless.
 More than the assistance of a thousand others

His sword avails : he is my chosen champion :
And he not only has with triumph closed
The fortunes of the day, but of the war.
Fame, though with different and discordant tongues,
Yet with them all speaks prodigies of him.
That Clefi now is in his hands a prisoner ;
Now that he's wounded mortally by him ;
And there are those who furthermore affirm
That he is slain already. I refused
To trace the footsteps of the fugitives :
I am accustom'd only to behold
The faces of my foes : but their defeat,
By Ildovaldo's lofty hardihood
Ere now is consummated. I rely
On him implicitly ; he, in one day,
'This menacing array of hostile strength
Hath utterly abolish'd by his skill.

Ros. I grieve that Alaric's retarded arms
Had not a share in this day's victory.
Yet not the less with him will I preserve
My faith inviolate. In future times
He may assist us ; and, which is a point
Of more importance for us to remember,
Us he can always injure. 'Tis decreed
Romilda should be his : this I to her
Already have announced. Wouldst thou believe it,
She dares deny her hand to Alaric !

Al. Oh ! can I hope so much ? . . . And can she
dare
So much to hope ?

Ros. Yes. But in vain denies it :
I have inform'd her that to-morrow's dawn
Must witness her departure. Rather would I

Forfeit my throne than thus betray my faith.

Al. But yet . . . compassion for the unhappy daughter.

Ros. Daughter of whom? compassion, dost thou say?

What do I hear? Should she who is the child
Of him who slew my sire be aught but wretched?

Al. It seems to me, that by severe commands
We should not sadden this victorious day.

Romilda is the last remaining issue

Of the ancient kings of Lombardy: e'en yet

We on the throne are insecurely seated:

Each subject here doth cherish in his heart

The recollection of the martial virtues,

And of the rapidly increasing power

Of Alboino, their legitimate lord.

The Lombards, led by his victorious steps,

Have ravaged, bound in fetters, or have burn'd

The whole of Italy, far as the Po

Doth water her, far as the Appenine,

The Alps, and the Adriatic sea extend.

The slaughter of a king so prosperous.

Entails on us a mighty stress of care,

Inveterate hatred, and incessant peril.

Tired of an arbitrary king, the people

Presumed to raise the standard of revolt:

'Twas easy to repress them: since the veterans

Preferr'd the undivided sway of one.

But if the troops should see the daughter wronged

Of their once great commander, who could then

To their allegiance trust? And what are we,

Tell me, bereft of them?

Ros. To me it happens,

Without a precedent, and unexpected,
That thou to-day, in an affair of state,
Shouldst feel discordantly from what I feel.
Arms I resign to thee ; but, in my palace,
Who shall prevent me from being absolute
In arts of peace ? Ah, do thou come to give
To nature the repose it so much wants !
'Gainst open hostile arms thou art to me
A shield : but each less noble care, unmeet
For a proud warrior, to me belongs.

ACT THE SECOND.

SCENE THE FIRST.

Almachilde, Ildovaldo.

Al. Come, Ildovaldo, to my arms ; embrace me ;
Thou of my glory art the chief support.
Subdued, I must confess, by thy deserts,
I have no recompense that equals them :
But yet, if I am able . . .

Il. Good, my lord,
Ascribe it not to merit in myself
If near the royal standard I have fought
Against the banners of the faithless Clefi ;
From my first unripe years, my ancestors
Have in my breast instill'd such principles,
That still the cause, whate'er the cause might be,
Of him who reign'd, seem'd sacred in my eyes.

Al. Thy modest speech gives of a loyal heart
A pledge most unequivocal : I know it ;
A man of prowess, ready to do more,
Esteems what he has done already nothing.

But what more now remains for thee to do ?
Thou hast completely routed, or destroy'd,
Those my perfidious foes, whom cowardice
Imp'd with such rapid and fugacious wings.
Breathless myself I left them in thy hands :
I knew that thy sword, where it was at work,
My sword would supersede.

Il. Fortune resolved

To smile on my endeavours. In thy power,
Cleft comes manacled before thee ; smitten,
But with no mortal wound. If at his fall
Some sparks of valour glimmer'd in the hearts
Of his adherents, soon were they extinguish'd ;
And with their leader all their spirit fell.

Al. My heart, oh Ildovaldo, put to proof.
Is there, in all the world, a favourite object
To which thy wishes tend ? Ah ! speak ; I dare not
Offer thee any thing ; but yet (who can
Except thyself ?) say what were that reward
Which least would wound thy virtue.

Il. Prince, I will not,
Since such to thee I am not, in thy presence
Assume the semblance of a passionate friend.
The throne, rather than thou, I sought to-day
To rescue by my arm ; the throne, whose safety
To-day in thy existence was involved.
Some one in future perhaps may fill that throne
For whom I should account I yielded little,
In yielding life itself : hence, in its cause
Was I a hardy combatant. Thou seest
That to serve thee was not my chiefest thought.
Hence thou art not my debtor ; and already
From the importunate load of gratitude

Thou art by me released.

Al. The more I hear,
The more do I admire thee. Yet by thee,
In this high contest, I will not be conquer'd.
Myself thou lovest not, and this to me
Have others said ; yet hence to trust to thee
A portion of the fight, nay, e'en the posts
Of greatest confidence, I never doubted.
I blame thee not ; since thou wert rather urged
By the attained honour of the throne,
Than by my peril, valiantly to fight.
I know that to a hero like thyself,
The means by which I sit upon the throne
Cannot seem worthy : I myself am first
Those means to execrate : but thou dost know,
My generous enemy, what horrible
And stern necessity to them impell'd me.
E'en me, another's subject, e'en myself
Once as thy equal thou didst see : nor then
(I dare to challenge thee to this) seem'd I
Unworthy thy esteem. Alas ! my fame
Is now no longer spotless : learn thou now,
That I, in heart, far far more infamous,
E'en than I'm deem'd by others, deem myself.
But on the bloody throne in indolence
I do not sleep ; and hope to clear myself,
In part, of the intolerable blot,
(Never, oh never, to be quite effaced !)
'Th' excruciating epithet of traitor.

Il. I thought assuredly thy heart had been
Far more corrupted by the name of king :
But yet it is not sound. To feel remorse,
And yet retain . . .

Al. And wish I to retain?

Ah! long ere now...

Il. But yet this throne; thou know'st...

Al. I know that to another it belongs;
And that it is not mine...

Il. Then...

Al. Listen to me.

'Tis in my power to make myself to-day
Far less unworthy of the throne I fill.
Hear me; and afterwards, if thou canst do it,
Refuse to countenance my purposes...
But whither does my blind desire impel me?
I have not yet a recompense discover'd
For thy past services, and yet presume
New ones to seek of thee?

Il. Ah! yes: speak on.

Deeming me one that for magnanimous deeds
Expects no recompense, thou dost alone,
By this conviction, recompense me amply.
Speak; wherein can I serve thee?

Al. Do not hope

That I shall tell it thee on other terms,
Except thou first, if in the world there be
Aught wherein I can serve thee, at my hands
Challenge that benefit. If of the realm
Thou wishest a great part (by merit all
Is thine,) or if some less ambitious thought,
Some gentler impulse, agitate thy heart,
From me conceal it not: I know full well
All blessings are not centred in a throne:
I know that there are other things, which gain'd,
Would far more constitute my happiness.
I know that much is wanting to my peace.

I know that in my heart an impulse lives
Which is the master-spring of my existence;
And more it burns in me, the more it meets
With obstacles. Ah! do thou then to me
Thyself unbosom, that I somewhat may
Benefit thee, now that thou canst so much,
Though others rights thou hold inviolate,
At once my cause assist.

Il. I will speak out,
Since thou wilt have it so.—I wish not power;
Ah no! ill couldst thou this confer; and gifts,
These always are of penitence and blood.
But since thou hast promised to unfold to me
Thy inmost thoughts, I will not of my own
Be niggardly. That which alone I wish
From thee would nothing take, and to myself
Were life.

Al. Name it; 'tis thine.

Il. For a long time
In love I've lived. Rosmunda can alone
Prevent the accomplishment of my desires,
And thou alone persuade her to relent.

Al. And she that has inflamed thee?

Il. Is Romilda...

Al. What do I hear?... Lov'st thou Romilda?...

Il. Yes...

But whence in thee such wonder?

Al. To myself
Thy love was utterly unknown.

Il. But why,
Now that I tell it thee, art thou thus troubled?
Why thus dost hesitate?...

Al. I?... pardon me...

I'm not perturbed.—Romilda! and hast thou
Thus for a long time loved her?

Il. What means this?

Perchance my love displeases thee? Perchance
That love doth not become me? Though she be
Of royal origin, I am not vile.

Rosmunda is the daughter of a king,
And she disdain'd not to bestow her hand
On thee, my equal.

Al. Is there any rank
For thee too lofty?... But thou know'st ... Ros-
munda
Disposes of Romilda; ... and that I...

Il. Canst thou, perchance, gain nothing from
Rosmunda,
And yet from thee she can obtain so much?
Enough.—I am already satisfied:
Thou hast already royally rewarded
All my much-vaunted merits by ... a promise.

Al. Ah no! ... believe it not ... I will ... But
speak...

Romilda... and doth she return thy love?

Il. Romilda... See, she comes.

SCENE THE SECOND.

Almachilde, Romilda, Ildovaldo.

Rom. Oh, Heaven! with whom
Do I behold him?—Oh, my baffled wishes!
Hast thou, at last, entwined thy spurious crown
With laurel wreaths? Does treachery to-day
The palm of conquest gain? And be it so.
But thou, oh warrior, of a noble soul,

Oh, Ildovaldo, wherefore dost thou waste
Thy lofty efforts in a cause like his ?
Should so much virtue stoop to make itself
A shield to so much infamy ?

Al. Towards me,
Lady, eternally implacable,
Is there no length of time, then, and no mode
Of assiduity, that may avail,
E'en in the least degree, to calm, or sooth,
Thy just disdain ? How in the camp I sought
That death, from which himself delivered me,
Can Ildovaldo tell thee. Ah ! thy pity
Towards me was ill directed : I should there
Have died, since her my victory offends.
But Heaven, who knows the innocence of my heart,
(Ah, were my hand as pure,) Heaven, perhaps, to-
day
Gave me not vainly conquest and renown,
There where I sought for death.

Il. Accuse me not,
Romilda, that I fought. Clefi with arms
Came not to yonder camp to avenge thy father ;
Himself the exterminator of the throne
He haughtily proclaim'd ; and for that throne
I combated.

Rom. To this oppressed race,
Clefi, as he profess'd, once more design'd
To restore freedom, or himself to reign.
And he adopted, to obtain his purpose,
Means far less infamous than those employed
By thee his predecessor. In the camp,
In the broad light of day, he boldly challenged
Man to meet man with soldier-like defiance :

And if the fates decree that an usurper
Should fill my empty patrimonial throne,
Let it, at least, belong to the most valiant.

Al. Breathes there the man who dares to call me
coward ?

In their invasions of the throne, have others
More bravery shewn than I in its defence ?
Dost thou eternally resent ? The error
That I committed with unwilling mind,
(This all well know) I only can repair ;
Yes, I alone. To yield thee good for ill
To me will be delightful : with my blood
I have meanwhile the empty throne defended ;
Thine is that throne, I know ; I swear to thee,
Thy rights I ne'er forget. Long, long ere now,
Had I obtain'd my wish, thou had'st possess it.
But now Rosmunda fills it, and it is . . .

Rom. Polluted throne, thou meed of treachery,
Without regret to others I resign thee ;
Be by Rosmunda fill'd : she, with thyself,
Of such a heritage is well deserving.
But if thy penitence be not dissembled ;
If to magnanimous words the practices
Of a degraded soul could e'er accord ;
Obtain for me, I pray thee, not the throne
Of my unnatural mother, but obtain
For me alone the empire o'er myself.
I ask a free life ; or I ask for death.
As if already in my murder'd father
She had not fully satisfied her rage,
The impious Rosmunda, to inflict
Torments more exquisite, protracts my life,
And sends me as a spouse to Alaric.

Il. What do I hear ?

Al. Listen, oh Ildovaldo !

Thou now canst judge thyself, if without cause
I answered thee with doubts . . .

Il. Of barbarous Alaric ?

Al. Ah ! no . . .

Rom. To Alaric hath she betroth'd me ;
And of assistance never sent am I
The recompense : and she, who of my throne,
And of my father, robb'd me, hath to this
Plighted her faith : and (who would e'er believe it ?)
Rosmunda will, on no condition, now
Betray her promise. By to-morrow's dawn,
I to these nuptial rites am doom'd to go :
But that to-morrow's dawn is not yet come.
Ah ! if than she thou canst be less atrocious ;
If 'tis indeed my fate, that I to-day
Must be a suitor to my father's murderer ;
Ah ! try at least to wean her from this purpose . . .

Al. Shall I try this ? to thee I freely swear
That thou shalt never go.

Il. And, by this sword,
I swear the same. Rosmunda, thou shalt hear me.

Rom. Behold ; she comes in rage.

SCENE THE THIRD.

Rosmunda, Almachilde, Romilda, Ildovaldo.

Ros. Dost thou thus here
Loiter with her ? thou, also, dost thou lend
An ear to her seditious words ? This is
A day of joy ; what boots it then, my champions,
To tarry 'mid the everlasting groans

Of this devoted daughter of misfortune?
Sigh'st thou, poor girl? and wherefore dost thou
sigh?

Ragauso, with a royal retinue,
Prepared to obey my orders, waits already
There to conduct thee, where auspicious nuptials,
And where another more illustrious throne,
Court thy acceptance.

Al. But of Alaric? . . .

Ros. What, does not such a king deserve her hand?

Al. So cruel . . .

Ros. Cruel e'en as Alboino?

She from a blood doth spring, in whom the sight
Of cruelty, whatever shape it wear,
Can ne'er excite surprise.

Il. Such marriage rites . . .

Al. To all disastrous . . .

Ros. Dost thou disapprove them?

Al. She her consent refuses.

Ros. And dost thou
Refuse it? I consent.

Rom. Does it annoy thee
That he is less inflexible than thou?

Ros. And dost thou think that he for thee feels pity?
Pity for thee? What darest thou to say?
For thee he feels no pity: woefully
Thou art deceived . . .

Al. As far as human breast
Can, in its fullest force, I feel it all;
And I avow it; and, if thou compel me,
I also will display it. Who can see,
Nor feel compassion for her, who can do it,
Such insults heap'd upon a royal virgin? . . .

Ros. All men may pity her, save Almachilde.

Il. If yet thou bear'st in mind the plenteous laurels
Which, for thyself, my sword has reap'd to-day,
My councils thou wilt hear. Much loss to thee,
If thou dost wrong Romilda, may accrue.

Al. Yes, fatal loss.

Il. Thou wilt, if wise, abstain.

Ros. Wise is Romilda; and she will obey me.
Keep thou for others thy advice. Dost thou
Already magnify thy services?
What hast thou done? thy duty. Thou, my husband,
Dissentest thou from me? and dar'st thou say it?
And must I lofty arguments of state
Discuss with thee before these witnesses?
Let us depart; ah come: for a short time
Leave her to penitence and wiser thoughts:
Her fears will give her, when she is alone,
Suggestions more judicious. Leave her now.—
Romilda, heard'st thou? Or by dawn of day
Go willingly from hence, and thou shalt have
An honourable escort by thy side,
Led by Ragauso; or refuse to go,
And he shall be enjoined to drag thee hence.

SCENE THE FOURTH.

Ildovaldo, Romilda.

Il. Drag her?... what do I hear! Ah, kill me
first...

Oh Heaven! Romilda... must I lose thee then?...

Rom. Ah! since the moment that my father died,
And I beheld myself within the power
Of such a step-dame, in my breast I cherish

No other hope, except the one of death.

Il. But, while I breathe . . .

Rom. Believe me, there remains
Nought else for me. I am prepared to die,
More than perhaps thou thinkest : in my heart
I wished to see thee yet once more, and give thee
The last farewell of love . . .

Il. Ah, hold thy peace !

Loving thou'rt loved, and speak'st to me of death
While I breathe vital air, and wield this sword ?
My soul, indeed, with sorrow is oppress'd,
Yet I despair not.

Rom. Say, from what quarter then
Can I expect relief ?

Il. From hands like these,
And cannot I avail to rescue thee ?

Rom. Yes, thou may'st do it ; but what will ensue ?
They have a throne ; and, in abundance, hence
The instruments of persecution : fierce,
Yet at once subtle, is Rosmunda's wrath.
Can that be baffled ? . . . And should I once more
Fall in her power ? . . . Now flatter not thyself :
My faith I cannot keep, except by death,
Inviolable to thee : thy sword, thy valour,
Thy life, do thou preserve, blows to inflict,
By which my father's shade may be appeased,
And my shade also. Live ; I leave to thee
T' avenge a father and a king betray'd,
And thy most faithful mistress.

Il. What do I hear ?

Oh, Heaven ! my heart thou rendest. Ah ! . . . if thou
Shouldst ever leave me . . . certainly for vengeance,
And nothing else, I live. But yet I hope

That thou wilt see fulfill'd, with thy own eyes,
The vengeance of my king and of thy father.
'Tis true, that kingly power I do not boast :
But much the terror of my name can do.
I in the bosoms of the valiant reign ;
The abject I despise. Beneath the banners
Of Alboino I have fought already.
I, in the camp, have many partizans
In arms accoutred ; in the ranks of war
Oft have the Lombards witness'd my exploits.
Each living man the venerated name
Of Alboino with a sigh pronounces ;
And thou'rt that Alboino's only child.
And, as respects the multitude, if all
That I now say were not ; speak, if thou canst,
Whether, 'mid those who shew thee violence,
One man can be adduced, who, in his heart,
So as to bear comparison with me,
Burns with an elevated flame like mine.
Rosmunda, much as step-dame can, indeed,
Hates thee ; but I love more than she abhors,
I, who at thy least nod would rush to death,
To give it or receive it.

Rom. Oh sublime,
Incomparable lover ! . . . Yet though great,
Thy fondness hath no strength to countervail
Her frantic and inexorable hate.

Il. Think not preposterous hope doth make me
blind :
I am sustain'd by valid arguments,
Add too, that Almachilde, as thou heardest,
Dares to oppose the execrable rite.

Rom. From him what canst thou hope ?

Il. Were I constrain'd
To stoop for thy deliverance to deceit,
I on his aid should ground no trifling hope.
I see already that his guilty consort
Is become irksome to him. To remorse
He yet appears to me accessible ;
The fear of her alone, in which he lives,
Renders him timid and irresolute.
That which he feebly counteracts in words,
I can induce him more effectively
To counteract in deeds. I do not doubt
My skill to fortify his half-resolves
With my entire resolves.

Rom. Thou little knowest
Rosmunda. Dost thou dream that force can be
A hindrance to her will? Prayers I address'd
To Almachilde, (and I now repent it,)
That he would intercede for me. Vain hope !
Shall that man, who to a flagitious wife
Has sold his reputation and himself,
That man who owes whatever he possesses,
Nor to another owes it, to his blind,
No less than infamous subserviency,
Shall he, I say, assist, against the wife
Who holds him thus in thrall, her hated rival ?

Il. Ere it be night, let prayers, or menaces,
Or blows take place, let fate determine which,
So that I lose thee not : still of this day
Enough remains my purpose to mature.
Quickly shall I discover if in others
Or in myself alone I must confide.
Hither shall I return to thee ere long :
If then our only remedy is death,

Death is decreed. 'Then, then will I receive
The last farewell which thou would'st yield me now;
But thou no sooner shalt to me have given it,
Than, drunk with love, and anger, and revenge,
I swear to open with my own right hand
A horrid path of blood . . . At least the death
Of many victims shall precede my own.
But can it be that others can exult
In our extinction? No one do I see
Betwixt the throne and thee, except Rosmunda.

Rom. And Almachilde? . . .

Il. Almachilde, sayst thou?

To-day this sword of mine his life preserved:
And should he be ungrateful, this my sword
May also give his death wound. Time and chance
Shall shape my independent purposes.
Meanwhile, a swift return, eternal faith,
A lofty vengeance for thy murdered father,
I swear to thee.

Rom. I would not rob thy heart
Of all its hope; but in myself one hope
Alone still lingers, once more to behold thee;
And on that hope I live. That I should now,
If thine I am not, drag on life, in vain
Wouldst thou desire. And that I should be thine
What expectation can I now retain? . . .
But in returning here to me be not
Tardy, I do conjure of thee.

Il. I tremble

When I behold how desolate thou art.
No not to live, I ask of thee alone
Delay, till death be indispensable:
This swear to me.

Rom. I swear it.

Il. I believe thee.

To give my last instructions I fly hence;
And here I speedily return to thee.

ACT THE THIRD.

SCENE THE FIRST.

Almachilde, Romilda.

Al. . . . Ah pardon me, if perhaps inopportunately
I dared to ask of thee in this thy threshold
A transient audience; but to prove to thee
How thoroughly my heart doth disavow
The cruelty of thy malignant step-mother,
Is of deep import to my bosom's peace.

Rom. And shall I trust thee? Ah! if this were
true! . . .

But what, am I so wretched that I ought
To owe the smallest solace to thy bounty? . . .
Oh my hard fate! I am, alas! too wretched!—
From these abominable marriage rites
Ah do thou respite me; and I perchance
To thee shall owe my peace.

Al. Far more than this,

Far more, I'm ready to perform for thee . . .
The prey of Alaric thou, by whom we've seen
Two wives already slain; one by the sword,
The next by poison? Thou, oh Heaven, design'd
Of every virtue, each accomplishment
To be the recompense; and who couldst make
Every man happy only by thy presence!—
—Ah, no; this, while I breathe, shall never be!
E'en if thou wished'st it, I would prevent it:

Infer from thence, if I will suffer it,
When unexampled violence is doom'd
To drag thee there. First arguments and prayers,
Then shall Rosmunda witness menaces,
And lastly deeds. And if I cannot *win* her,
She shall be *wrested* from the monstrous project.
There lives not one more ardent in the cause
Of thy defence than I : or thou shalt spend
Thy days within these walls, or I will lose
My kingdom with my life.

Rom. And wherefore thus
Generous art thou towards me ?

Al. I never felt
Torment more exquisite from any cause
Than from thy hate.

Rom. But can I ever cease
To hate thee ? In indignant menaces
My unavenged father . . .

Al. What sayst thou ?
I kill'd him not : Rosmunda murder'd him . . .

Rom. All are convinced that, by her menaces,
Thou to the horrid treachery wert compell'd :
But yet the alternative 'twixt thy own death,
Or of inflicting death upon thy king,
She gave to thee. 'Tis true, that thou already,
Ignorant thyself of the dire stratagem,
Hadst stain'd thy monarch's bed ; but with thy blood,
And with the blood of thy immodest mistress,
Thou wert required to wash out such a stain ;
That was the sole atonement for thy crime :
But thou dar'dst make atonement with a crime
Of a far deeper dye. That death which thou
Gavest another, to thyself was due :

Yet thou still sleepest in the injured bed ;
A subject thou, the consort of thy king,
And the usurp'd and blood-besprinkled throne
Thou keepest still ; and, doing this, dar'st thou
Boast of thy noble heart ? speak of kind deeds ?
And dost thou hope that I should trust to thee ?
And dar'st thou hope that I should hate thee less ?—
Portentous, melancholy as they are,
Let me no more from the everlasting night
Of silence such remembrances recall :
I may suppress them when I hear thee not.—
Rescue me now from this extreme distress,
And perhaps thou mayst appear to me my saviour.
But, if I think of thee, what art thou else
To me except the murderer of my father ?

Al. Must then my tears, my penitence, remorse,
Avail me nothing ?

Rom. To this subject now
Wherefore direct thy thoughts ? Can I hurt thee ?
What signifies to thee my enmity ?
The powerless daughter of a murder'd king,
What profits it to flatter her ?

Al. To fail
Is human ; but contrition for a fault
Distinguishes the virtuous from the wicked.
Thou canst not know the anguish of my heart ;
Ah, if thou knew'st it !—From the day I weep,
That I became the inhabitant of these
Lugubrious walls, where always I behold thee
Immersed in tears ; yet thou at once art seen
Mild in thy anger, modest in thy grief,
In suffering magnanimous . . . What heart
Is there so hard that doth not feel for thee

Emotions of compassion?

Rom. Thy compassion!

'Tis too humiliating for me to bear it . . .

Yet ah, my destiny . . . I am not able
Entirely to despise it.

Al. Ere that aught
Which I can do challenge thy gratitude,
Say, is it that he is accounted cruel,
The only cause of thy antipathy
To Alaric?

Rom. And Alboino's daughter,
Doth she not, in accepting thy assistance,
Betray herself sufficiently? Wilt thou
Also that she participate with thee
The secrets of her heart?

Al. There then exists
With thee a motive for reserve towards me?
Perhaps thus the means of an effectual aid . . .

Rom. And if there were another? . . . But thou
art . . .

What saidst thou?—Hitherto I here have lived,
And here 'twould sooth me by my father's side
To share his tomb: art thou not satisfied?
All my thoughts now are centred in the grave;
But death to me would be more welcome here:
Hence this I ask from you, to you a light,
But to myself a most important gift.

Al. Death! Ah, Romilda! I to thee repeat it,
Here shalt thou have a cheerful dwelling place;
And more I say to thee, I hope to see thee
Here reinstated in thy usurped rights.
I can, if not thy sire, thy throne restore;
I ought to do it, and I will; and I

Will make thee, by no doubtful proofs, behold
The bias of my heart . . . how deeply there . . .
Nay how indelibly . . . I bear impress'd . . .
Thy image . . .

Rom. What is this I hear? Alas!
What looks! . . . What meanest thou to say to me?

Al. . . . That which I cannot now conceal from
thee . . .
That which thou mayest on my trembling face
Now read engraved . . . I burn, and long I've burned
With love . . . for thee.

Rom. What dar'st thou to confess?
Oh cruel destiny! hast thou reserved me
For such an outrage?

Al. If thou dost esteem
My love an outrage, I have ample means
Myself to punish . . .

Rom. Ah, thou wretch! dared'st thou
Colour with virtue thy atrocious passion?

Al. Alas! . . . Oh hear me . . . criminal desires . . .
But criminal effects thou ne'er shalt see . . .
For thee I will do all; but from thyself
I demand nothing.

Rom. Peace. Shall thou, defiled
Still with my father's blood, name love to me?
Thou love to me!—thou art Rosmunda's spouse,
And of no other worthy.

Al. Ah! what name
Of execration do I not deserve! . . .
Yet that I love thee is my destiny,
Inevitable destiny; and never,
Never will I this prostrate posture quit,
If first . . .

Rom. Arise, be silent, and depart . . .
But here comes one who quickly will extinguish
A flame like this . . .

Al. Who is it I behold ?

SCENE THE SECOND.

Rosmunda, Almachilde, Romilda.

Rosmunda. Me thou dost see, perfidious traitor !
me.—

Ye are well match'd in turpitude : to learn
'The certainty of your disloyalty
Stabs me the deepest : but I will not bear
Its penalty alone. Your guilty plots
I come to disappoint.—Miscreant, dost thou
Render me such a recompense ?—And thou,
With thy feign'd virtue . . .

Rom. Keep them all for him,
Those names appropriate to himself alone :
He is the sole delinquent ; he the traitor,
He the dissembling liar ; he maintains
With thee such faith as thou deservest ; such
As should the guilty with the guilty keep.
I the delinquent am not ; he suborned me,
With base contrivances, to hear his words . . .

Al. I will myself, since thou hast learn'd a part,
Divulge the whole to thee. I love, adore
Romilda ; nor is this a flame at which
I need to blush. Seek in thyself, and thou
The conscious reason speedily wilt find,
Whence thou hast not my love, as thou pretendest.
I, not for crimes design'd, could I e'er love
Her who seduced me to them ? Space immense

Betwixt Rosmunda and Romilda lies;
Thou feel'st that it is so. I love Romilda,
And traitresses abhor. In what perdition
Thy fierce and haughty vengeance can o'erwhelm
me.

I know already; yes, thou art to me
But too completely known! Ah, could I thus,
As I have slain her father, could I die!
Could I appease Romilda's just disdain
Expiring! Ah, that I had never been
To thee a husband! That I were not now
A traitor and a regicide! and then
Romilda had not had her heart so closed
Against my love.

Rom. I! I should hate thee still,
Not the assassin of my sire, not girt
With his ill-gotten crown, and not espoused
To a fierce step-mother. Far greater merit,
Far greater than thy own, far nobler heart,
Do I require to make me hear of love.
E'en as my murder'd father renders thee
To me abominate, so much and more,
Thy wife betray'd, though such a wife she be,
Makes thee in my esteem contemptible.
Renown'd by her means, your united guilt,
That blood which thou hast spill'd, should have join-
ed thee

To her in everlasting fellowship.
I cannot, even in my own behalf,
'Treason endure; how much less then can I
Endure a traitor! In my breast I bear
Another flame more noble, whence my face
Is not discolour'd with the blush of shame.

I am prepared to die, but not prepared,
No, never, never to resign my love.

Al. Thou lovest?

Rom. Ildovaldo.

Al. This indeed,

This is indeed the blow that quite unmans me.

Ros. Speakst thou the truth, or dost thou still de-
ceive me?

Dost thou love Ildovaldo?

Rom. I adore him

With such affection as not e'en in thought
Ye can conceive, much less then feel in heart :
We are not for participated crimes
Scourged with remorseful visitings ; our souls
Unspotted, 'twixt each other have no strife
Save that of which shall love the other best.
To him those mournful days, those days in which
I have perchance unluckily survived
My murder'd sire, to him I consecrate :
To me his life, his lofty fame, his sword,
His sword invincible, he consecrates.
But should our life be cheated of its objects ;
Should we of all deliverance, all revenge
Be disappointed, yet e'en then were we
Eternally less desolate than you.
Death were our refuge then, and unsubdued
Shall we obtain it ; for to abject minds
The noble never yield : exultingly
Shall we embrace him since betwixt us shared,
From penitence and from reproaches free,
From terror and remorse ; and finally
We shall obtain a death a thousand times
More sweet than your appalled, degraded lives.

Ros. Enough; depart. Thou soon shalt know thy fate.

SCENE THE THIRD.

Rosmunda, Almachilde.

Ros. Perfidious, infamous, disloyal, perjured!—
At last without constraint, I may pour out
On thee my curses. Dost thou love another? . . .
But heaven hath well ordain'd; and such return
Awaits thy passion as that passion merits.
Oh joy ineffable! For who could bear,
Who, save myself, the love of such a miscreant?
Almost Romilda hath my fondness won
Since I have heard her speak to thee. Oh why,
As much as she does, cannot I detest thee?
To me dost thou return such recompense,
To whom thou ow'st so much?—To me, oh vile!
Who even from the throne to thee have stoop'd?
Now answer me . . . but what canst thou adduce
That may extenuate thy turpitude?

Al. Extenuate! Delinquents always seek,
And seldom find, a plausible excuse.
But to love virtue such as never heaven
Lodged in a lady's bosom, I account
A glory, and no crime.

Ros. Dost thou then add
Insult to perfidy?

Al. Thou dost esteem
All homage that to virtue is awarded
An insult to thyself; I know it well:
But what of that? Where I discover worth,
Should I, on this account, admire it less?

Romilda hates me ; this I've heard too clearly ;
And with a fresh wound hath she pierced my heart.
Hence in myself a sorrow do I feel
Surpassing every sorrow. To the winds
I know my sighs are scatter'd ; all my hopes
Are baffled and betray'd : yet not for this
Can I e'er cease to love her !—Thou canst not
Reproach my want of faith, who knowest well
Where, how, and wherefore I on thee bestow'd it.
Thou, who know'st well that thou didst there con-
strain me

Death to receive or give ; that thou didst arm
My wavering right-hand with the murderous sword :
Dost recollect ? and there, 'mid tears and treason,
Darkness and blood, didst thou, exacting love,
Swear love to me ; but say, does love permit
Her oaths to be exchanged where foul revenge
Her altars has erected ? That I there
Was criminal I cannot contradict.
But couldst thou, lady, e'er esteem the faith
Required, and given, at such a horrible time,
The genuine offspring of a lasting love ?

Ros. Yes ; I deceived myself : I should have known
That never is the bosom of a traitor
With one perfidious action satisfied.
'Twould have been wiser to have avail'd myself
For my revenge, of thy imperfect courage,
And afterwards, by immolating him
That slew his circumvented king, have sought
To appease that murdered king's vindictive shade.
This was the recompense befitting thee ;
Not my right-hand ; not my imperial bed ;
Not a participation of my throne ;

Not of my heart.

Al. Illustrious penitence!

Thou art indeed Rosmunda.—Why not now
That which thou didst not perfectly perform,
Accomplish utterly? Send forth thy spies;
Another Almachilde fix upon
(There will not such be wanting;) let him quickly
Make me the counterpart of thy first lord:
And in the blood of me, thy second spouse,
Tell him to cleanse thy matrimonial sword,
Still reeking with my predecessor's gore.
Not for betraying thee, that were no crime,
For having served thee, a far greater fault,
I merit, and expect such recompense.
But while the heavens still keep it dubious
Which of us two shall first the other punish,
I, by the shade of murdered Alboino,
Swear, that Romilda of thy violence
Shall not be victim. Meanwhile let us try,
Myself, and Ildovaldo, which of her
Can prove ourselves most worthy; which most burns
With ardent fondness; which in enterpriso
Is most intrepid; to obtain her, which,
To danger and to death, most dauntlessly
Will bid defiance.

SCENE THE FOURTH.

Rosmunda.

Ros. What canst thou accomplish?—
Who ever saw such mad temerity?—
But yet what can he not effect, since I
Have dared myself all military power

In him to lodge? . . . To thee am I then known,
 E'en as I am? No, no, thou know'st me not,
 Not half my power thou know'st.—And I have loved
 thee? . . .

That love is at an end, and thou shall see it.—
 Rage, hatred, jealousy, and frantic passion,
 And haughty contumely, my bosom quit;
 Ye mixed and contradictory desires
 Evacuate my heart: and thou, revenge,
 Return, return, and make me wholly thine;
 Fill me with all thy influence; if I
 Have evermore accounted thee my first
 And only deity!—But do I spend
 My time and rage in inefficient words?
 Rather should I anticipate his schemes,
 And frustrate all his impious machinations . . .
 Whom do I see?

SCENE THE FIFTH.

Rosmunda, Ildovaldo.

Ros. Here have the heavens themselves
 Sent thee to me; come, Ildovaldo, come,
 The avenger of my wrongs; the minister
 Of thy eternal joy, and my revenge,
 I hope, at once, to make thee. By Romilda,
 Loving, thou'rt loved; I know the whole, nor blame
 it;

But transport inexpressible from thence
 Rather derive. But thou dost not yet know
 That the perfidious Almachilde, he
 For whom thou hast such difficulties braved,
 For whom, to-day, confronted death and dangers,

That very Almachilde, to thyself
Ungrateful, and to me perfidious,
Himself Romilda loves.

Il. Ah, miscreant !
He by my hand shall die.

Ros. Nor doth he love her
With lukewarm passion ; no ; for he betrays
For her each sacred duty ; stands prepared
For violence the most extravagant :
He boasts of this excess, and I believe him.
'Tis true Romilda hates him fervently ;
'Tis true that she, this instant, swore to him
Eternal hate ; and, in my presence, swore,
At the same time, to thee eternal love ;
For thy sake, she profess'd that death seemed easy . . .
But Almachilde, though he heard her words,
Was not discouraged. Rather he derives
From every obstacle a fresh incentive —
Who will restrain him if thou dost not do it ?
I hope to find in thy persisting ardour
A prevalent hindrance to his base desires :
This to thyself thou owest ; and to this
Do my commands excite thee.—I desist
From every other project for Romilda ;
She is no longer Alaric's, but thine ;
I will that she be thine. My ancient hate
Yields to this more engrossing enmity ;
May she with thee be happy ; take her thou ;
And from my eyes eternally remove her.

Il. Is then Romilda mine ? Exquisite joy !
Whence could I not with this arm rescue her ? . . .
Is she then mine ?—But who meanwhile fulfils
My unaccomplished vengeance ?

Ros. Go, collect
Thy faithful partizans ; arm them forthwith ;
Menace, deceive, use force : at all events
Rescue thy lady from the miscreant's hands ;
But leave to my discretion final vengeance.
First let the guilty traitor see his prey
Snatched from his grasp ; first in his rival's arms
Let him behold her placed ; and at the sight
Let him despair, and impotently chafe . . .

Il. What ? Is Romilda in his arms already ?

Ros. He is forestall'd ; yet is he not less bold,
Nor less a lover than thyself . . .

Il. He is
In all things my inferior.

Ros. Thou shouldst then
Prevent him, and delude him. To thy choice
I leave all projects ; I would not expose
Thy passion to a dubious issue.

Il. Fraud
Is irksome to me ; for in fraud alone
Could Almachilde conquer me. Meanwhile
Watch thou o'er him ; I to the camp repair,
'There arm my forces, and, ere it be long,
Return here to Romilda.

Ros. Quick ; dispatch ;
Reflect on all things, and for all provide ;
And be alike in mind and body arm'd :
Thou'rt a true lover. Go, fly hence, return.

SCENE THE SIXTH.

Rosmunda.

Ros. Meanwhile my measures I will here adopt.—

But shall I make her happy in her love
Whom I abhor? Happy?—Thou art not yet so :
And I yet live.

ACT THE FOURTH.

SCENE THE FIRST.

Romilda, Ildovaldo.

Rom. I've seen Rosmunda. Can I now believe? . . .

Il. All is at length disposed : thou'rt safe already,
Provided that thou wilt at fall of night
To me repair. Scarce from the fatal walls
Shall we have parted, ere we shall discover
A guard of chosen champions : afterwards
All obstacles will vanish with our progress.

Rom. Oh thou, my true defender ! Who indeed
Could have imagined this ? Where I expected
Death, as the least of ills, shall I receive
Life and enjoyment from the same Rosmunda ?
Say, should my bosom welcome such a hope ?
We, who were erewhile in the depths of woe,
Are, in a space incalculably swift,
Raised to the pinnacle of happiness ?
I join'd to thee ? I free ? exempt from danger ? . . .
Can this be true ?

Il. That I should rescue thee
I was convinced, but in a different manner :
Yet this involves less danger to ourselves.
In this Rosmunda doth befriend herself,
E'en more than us ; she is compell'd to do it.
It grieves me, for the present, to be forced
To drag thee from thy kingdom ; but, in safety

Provided that I see thee, hopes I cherish
To reconduct thee in another fashion
One day to thy hereditary realm.

Rom. Where'er with thee I am my kingdom lies.
Hence I've such transports that all seems unreal . . .
But yet such ecstasy scarce counteracts
The new forebodings that assault my heart.
The traitor Almachilde is my lover ;
I have not merited his impious love ;
All unexpected to my innocent ears
It came ; but yet I heard it ; nor in him . . .

Il. I should have understood that miscreant better :

But for my gifts I swear I will exact
A recompense ; the victory, the realm,
His life that I defended with my blood,
He shall repay to me. But, for the present,
I ought to shun him, and I will, while thou
Art not in safety.

Rom. Ah ! thou canst not know
What agonizing wounds my heart sustain'd
In hearing his base words ! How all at once
I seem'd less worthy in my own esteem,
Since I had pleased a nature so ignoble !
Oh how I hate him !—But Rosmunda is
The origin of all my wretchedness ;
She has oppress'd and laden me with insults,
And evermore degraded me. I feel
An inauspicious presage in my heart
That she will never, never prove to me
The instrument of safety ; I know well
The infinite abhorrence, which, in her,
By her ferocity, her deadly crimes,

And rankling jealousy, is now redoubled.
But all, whate'er they be, all the effects
Of her wild passions, as a lesser ill
I rather chuse to bear, than the base love
And insolent addresses of her minion.

Il. His foolish hardihood shall cost him dear :
Appease thyself ; it was no crime of thine
That thou didst hear him.

Rom. I, but for one moment,
Should ne'er have seem'd accessible to him ;
Behold my fault ; should never have endured
That he for my misfortunes dared to seem
Impress'd with pity ; never should have made him
The witness of my tears ; a joy by me
To proud Rosmunda evermore denied.
Often my eyes with tear-drops ill suppress'd,
My heart with sorrow fill'd, the miscreant saw ;
Hence rose his boldness ; . . . hence my guilt arose ;
And a disgrace I ever must deplore . . .

Il. To make thee e'en exult in this, leave me ;
And him in tears of blood to weep his crime.
To him who never blamed thee yet, Romilda,
One look of thine, in which thy innocent soul,
And thy most pure and ardent heart, shine forth,
More than exculpates thee.—Let this suffice.
Be thou here ready at the approach of night
To follow me ; of nothing else take thought.
Meanwhile the sight of Almachilde shun ;
Thus his suspicions wilt thou best defeat.
Rosmunda equally do thou avoid,
For she, perchance . . .

Rom. I understand thee well ;
Lest in her bosom for a pitying deed

Remorse arise.

Il. Farewell. A longer stay
Our projects may defeat.

Rom. Dost thou then leave me?

Il. Ere long, and never more shall we be severed.

SCENE THE SECOND.

Almachilde, Romilda, Ildovaldo, Soldiers.

Al. Oh stop!

Rom. Oh Heaven!

Il. Who brings thee here before me?

Rom. Circled by soldiers! . . .

Al. Whither dost thou fly?

Oh stop. Much have I to impart to thee.

I do not come, although I have the power,

By violence to restrain thee. In the camp

Thou hast, by stealth, arm'd thy most faithful fol-
lowers:

Tell me the cause? Perchance, on the same day

Thou wouldst defend thy monarch and betray him.

Il. That I defended thee no more recall;

This is the only stigma on my honour;

Do not remember it: if no one else

Can wash it out, assuredly canst thou

By such a recompense as thou hast given.

Rom. Traitor, dar'st thou, where I am, come in
arms,

And feign conciliatory purposes?

Al. No, no, I do not feign. Since I have tried

With words in vain, 'tis needful now with deeds

That I should prove to thee my love.

Il. Thou wretch . . .

Rom. And dar'st thou yet? . . .

Al. If 'tis your will, ye hear

From me no more the language of a king :
But if ye do refuse, ye shall be forced
To hear my words. The time is now gone by
For me to moderate my fatal love :
In vain I will'd it, and in vain ye hope it.
I scorn to have recourse, for thy possession,
To circumventive stratagems ; yet never,
That others by such means should win thy charms
Will I endure. Thou mean'st to drag her hence ;
This seems to me unworthy of thy valour ;
Pursue a wiser plan ; I am prepared,
I swear to thee, beneath my kingly power
To seek no refuge.

Il. If thou dost not make

Thy ill-gain'd power a refuge from my rage,
Say, as a refuge from what danger then ?
What lying pomp of noble sentiments
Dar'st thou assume, while here on every side
Begirt with armed satellites ?

Al. 'Tis true

I keep these at my side, lest thou shouldst not
Consent at present to appear my equal.
These are a monarch's train ; this likewise is
A warrior's sword ; the sword alone I keep ;
These, if thou fear'st not, at one nod of mine
Shall disappear. Bestir thyself : to thee
I give the challenge : let Romilda be
The guerdon of the most successful valour.

Il. Do thou then die beneath this hand of mine! ..

Rom. Your swords! . . . oh heavens! . . . why are
ye thus outrageous?

Cease, Ildovaldo ; does he merit, think'st thou,
That thou shouldst join with him in single combat ?

Il. Thou speakest truth. To what indignity,
Heated with rage, would I demean myself !

Rom. Canst thou endure the look of Ildovaldo,
Much less the opposition of his sword ?

And if untoward fate to thee should yield
The palm of victory, dost thou fondly think
That I should e'er be thine ? Dost thou not know
That I love Ildovaldo more than life,
And that I hate thee more than I love him ?

Il. Should he, then, most a veteran in arms,
Or most a veteran in treachery, gain her ?

Al. What ? While I make myself thy equal ; while
I hold myself in readiness to fight
For that which I could wrest from thee, thou dar'st
To a magnanimous challenge make reply
With taunting words ?—Thou wilt not be my equal ?
Then thou art not so : then to-day, I ought,
As fitting from the greater to the less,
Thy insolence to punish. First by right,
And afterwards by every other means,
If thou compel me to them, have I fix'd
To gain my purpose. On no terms will I
Romilda yield to thee. I loved her first :
The outrage which my right-hand did to her,
My right-hand only can repair once more :
I can avenge her : to her ancient rights,
To all her lost possessions, can restore her ;
I can do this ; and this thou canst not do,
Nor any one but me.

Rom. It is most true ;
Thou canst add perfidy to perfidy,

And thou alone canst do it. Traitor, go :
Wert thou ungrateful only to thy wife,
More than enough e'en that would be to make thee
Detestable to me. I heed not death :
What do I say ? far rather would I go
A certain sacrifice to Alaric ;
Far rather here remain a slave, exposed
To the dire malice of my cruel step-mother,
Than e'er as my defender suffer thee.

Il. And I profess to thee, that never thou
Didst a more deep opprobrium cast on me
Than in the attempt to make thyself my equal.
Thou hast not with this foolish love of thine
As yet offended me. Art thou, perchance,
A rival to be fear'd, except, indeed,
The prize disputed be Rosmunda's love ?
And she is verily thy counterpart.—
Nor doth thy dark ingratitude inflict
A deeper wound : in this I recognise
In thee a real king.—By hands most vile
Be my head severed from my lifeless trunk
On the dire scaffold ; but to single combat
No longer challenge me ; in doing this
Thou dost alone offend me. Have I stain'd
My sword, as thou hast, with nocturnal blood,
So that I could, exempted from dishonour,
With thy sword measure it ?

Al. Enough, enough.
Save with thy tongue thou wilt not combat ? wilt
not
Receive me as thy rival ? As thy king
Thou shalt receive me then.—Arrest him, soldiers.

Rom. Ah ! no . . .

Il. Vile sword, that didst defend a tyrant,
Lie on the earth. My hand, and not another's,
Shall strip me of my arms . . .

Rom. Your leader bound
In fetters ! Ah, vile sycophants ! . . . now hear me ;
Suspend . . . perhaps I . . . Oh horrible state ! . . . Oh
hear me . . .

Il. What art thou doing ? Wherefore pray'st thou
thus ?—

I love thee ; and thou lov'st me in return.
What cause have we to fear ?

Al. Without delay
From my sight drag him.

Il. My sole punishment
Arises from thy presence. Let us go.—
Provided that I never more should see thee,
At once I leave to thee my last farewell,
Beloved Romilda, and the solemn vow
Of love eternal, e'en beyond the tomb.

SCENE THE THIRD.

Romilda, Almachilde.

Rom. Ah ! let me fall exhausted at thy side . . .
I will pursue him . . . Wretch, dost thou prevent me ?
At all events . . .

Al. Ah ! hinder not, that I,
A little while at least, detain thee here.

Rom. Oh rage ! oh grief ! . . . Permit me at his
side . . .

Al. Hear me.

Rom. Too much already have I heard thee . . .
My lover . . .

Al. Thou canst not pursue him now ; . . .
 But fear not : I, for liberty and life,
 Spite of my wishes, for thyself, perchance,
 Preserve him yet. In a dark dungeon he
 Shall never be immured ; nor shall endure,
 I swear, from my hands any misery.
 I well remember yet, that by his means
 I am alive to-day : he hath sustain'd
 Transient coercion But . . . oh Heaven ! . . . to suffer
 Another thus to seize my only good
 On earth, thy precious presence . . .

Rom. Yet of love ? . . .

Ah, why have I not here a sword to free me
 From thy unwelcome words !

Al. Ah ! pardon me ;
 I will not utter more. I hope, in short,
 Amply to rescue from this transient wrong
 Thy lover, (envied name !) and hope, at once,
 Of what I owe him to discharge myself.

Rom. Dost feign humanity ? So much art thou
 More in mine eyes an object of abhorrence.
 What canst thou give ? what debt canst thou repay ?
 Restore our liberty ; and never more
 Molest our presence, never ; the sole gift
 Is this, which thou canst yield to me.

Al. Oh never
 Can I surrender thee to any one :
 But, spite of thy consent, I may obtain thee.

Rom. I think it not : and shall that ever happen
 While I've a dagger to defend myself ?
 To cheat me, or to wrest me from my purpose,
 In vain thou hopest. One with Ildovaldo . . .

Al. Of him, of me, and of thyself, the mistress

I wish to see thee : in my bosom, fraud
I harbour not. Only prevent not thou
That I exert myself for thee. If I
Already have bereft thee of thy father,
And neither tears nor penitence to thee
Once more can bring him back ; I will to-day,
Aught else of which thou hast been robb'd, restore.
Rosmunda is an everlasting blot
To my good fame : in seeing her alone
I feel the incurable and festering wound
Of dire remorse, within my heart become
More insupportable from day to day :
The bed, the throne, the love of such a woman,
(While I am doomed to share them,) render me
More guilty in the eyes of other men,
And in my own more vile. The time is come . . .

Rom. The time for what ? . . . Speak ; speak . . .

Oh, worthy thou,
Worthy Rosmunda, nay, far worse than she,
Thou wouldst, perchance, at a command of mine
Thyself destroy her ? Now, thou miscreant, know,
That most intensely as I do detest her,
I rather would on thee, than her, obtain
Meet retribution. True it is, the death
Of my ill-fated father was, at first,
The project of Rosmunda ; but the wretch
Who dared to perpetrate it, who was he ?—
Go ; for I well perceive, by thy discourse,
That no great stress of words were needful now
To goad thee on to new enormities.

Al. I have committed one ; but, in my mind,
More than one great and expiatory deed
Do I revolve ; and it shall be the first

To disencumber my unworthy brows
Of this unlawful crown, and give it thee,
For it is due to thee ; whate'er the risk,
Thy champion, the defender of thy rights
To make myself, beneath thy feet to lay
Prostrate the pride (and be it whom it may)
Of thy oppressor : afterwards, when safe
I shall behold thee on the throne, e'en then
Of all thy vassals to profess myself
The most submissive, the most culpable,
And the most reverential ; then to hear
My final sentence from thy lips ; to see
(Ah sight of woe !) enthroned, and at thy side
Thy Ildovaldo, my liege sovereign :
And drag, so long as it seems good to thee,
In desolation my opprobrious days,
The laughing-stock of all ; and 'mid such woe
Retain no other solace in the world
Than that of seeing thee : a crime not mine,
As far as in me lies, by means like these,
I shall have expiated . . .

Rom. Cease, oh cease.

I do not at thy hands require a throne :
Restore to me my lover, he is mine
More than the throne is mine, and more I prize him.
If thou deny this, thou shalt see me fall
By my own hands.

Al. Thy lover then shall be
To me the surety of thy life. I swear
I will inflict on him the direst tortures
If thou lay'st violent hands upon thyself.
Take heed : . . . With too much fervency e'en now
I hate my rival . . . in my breast I bear

A rage too desperate ; do not add, I pray thee,
Fury, to fury too intense already . . .
I ask no other boon, than leave to act
An humble instrument in thy behalf ;
And at the expense of my eternal woe,
To make thee fortunate in thy allotment.
And what reward do I require ? Towards me
Somewhat to mitigate thy fierce aversion,
And somewhat my own infamy. And this,
Whether thou wilt or not, I will perform ;
I fly to consummate my purposes.
Ah ! perhaps my deeds may be more prevalent
To soften thy aversion than my words.
Meanwhile I yield thee time for meditation . . .
My baseness thou alone canst verify,
By persevering to esteem me base.

SCENE THE FOURTH.

Romilda.

Rom. Ah wretched me ! . . . What evils does he threaten ?

To what do hatred and my rage impel me ?
He in his fetters holds my love : I will
Save him, whate'er the risk . . . Wretch that I am !
I am compell'd to feign with this fell monster . . .
Oh Heaven ! if he deluded me ? I freeze . . .
I tremble . . . Ildovaldo in the power
Of an offended rival ; thou hast not
A sword, with which illustriously to die . . .
Nor can I give thee one . . . what should I do ?
To whom recur for aid ? . . .

SCENE THE FIFTH.

Rosmunda, Romilda.

Ros. Where is the traitor ?
With thee erewhile he here held conference : . .
Where has he flown ?

Rom. Now hear . . .

Ros. I have heard all.
In guilty fetters Ildovaldo groans.
Where, where is he, that in my palace thus
Usurps the royal power ? Perfidious woman,
He was erewhile with thee . . .

Rom. Ah ! do thou hear me.
Yet thou know'st not the whole ; his impious views
Thou hast not yet discover'd : to myself
Is ill applied the stigma of perfidious.
But yet deem me perfidious still, if that
In any wise can solace thee ; and make
An exhibition cruel as thou canst
Of my devoted person : but only now
From his accursed hands, without delay,
Wrest Ildovaldo ; thence . . .

Ros. Thou shalt behold
That I will wrest him quickly.

Rom. May just Heaven,
If thou dost this, be to thy reign propitious ;
And may the calm shade of my murder'd father
No more thy nights disturb ; may the new villain
That thou hast foster'd at thy side, alone
Fall victim of his own atrocity !
But if 'twould be a task too difficult
To loose my faithful lover's impious chains,

At least allow, that in his dungeon he
Obtain a sword, by which to free himself
From the fierce rancour of a cruel rival.
And at the same time grant, ere he expire,
That he may learn that I defied all force ;
That in myself secure, worthy of him,
I by no hands, except my own, here fell
Transfix'd ; and here, invoking his loved name,
Breathed forth my latest sigh.

Ros. Lov'st thou so well ?

And is thy love so fervently return'd ?
Oh rage ! . . . and I . . . Be pacified ; ere long
Thou shalt behold thy lover disenthral'd ; . . .
Go . . . and my presence carefully avoid :
Amply on me art thou avenged already ;
I am most wretched, and am I compell'd
To make thee happy . . . thee ?

Rom. Although thy rage
Alone dispose thee to espouse my cause,
On that account I shall not be less grateful ;
Nor will I hide from thee the precipice
Towards which thou art impell'd. Madden'd with
love,
The ungrateful Almachilde would at once
From thee thy sceptre and thy freedom wrest,
Perhaps take thy life away : and further dares
To tempt me with the infamous reversion
Of these abominable gifts.

Ros. 'Tis thou,

Thou vile enchantress, that hast thus seduced him.

Rom. Then murder me ; and save, without delay,
My Ildovaldo only . . .

Ros. For thy sake

Is such commotion raised? Ah! who art thou?
Are thy deserts so great? Thou liest. Oh rage!
And am I doom'd from thy lips to receive
This horrid secret?... Must I then by thee
Be saved? If to thy vows the heavens be kind,
Go thou so far from me that I no more
Tidings of thee may hear: Oh never, never,
May I behold thee happy... Hence... away!...

Rom. But...

Ros. Didst thou hear me?

SCENE THE SIXTH.

Rosmunda.

Ros. Oh despair! oh death!
And am I then, am I, compell'd to fly
To loose, myself, her lover from his chains?

ACT THE FIFTH.

SCENE THE FIRST.

Rosmunda, Almachilde, Soldiers.

Ros. To the camp goest thou?

Al. But I shall thence...

Return...

Ros. And I expect thee from the camp
A conqueror here: here keep for thee thy victims.

Al. Time now is wanting to reply to thee.
First would I shew myself to Ildovaldo.

Ros. Go, fly, and fight: I have myself unloosed
His fetters. Thou, erewhile, in single combat
Didst wish to encounter him: but if his hands

With chains were laden, how could he resist thee ?
Released, already he expects thee ; run
To triumph over him.

Al. Thy trait'rous arts,
My rival, and the disaffected camp,
All equally I scorn. At length, for once,
Thou hast afforded me a valid reason,
Whence with good right I may appear to thee
A foe avowed : irrevocably now
Thou hast released me from thy interests.

Ros. Go
Conquer, return ; and menace afterwards.

Al. I shall be victor ; Heaven supports my cause :
Who, if I fall, remains to punish thee !

SCENE THE SECOND.

Rosmunda.

Ros. Go, go ; in Ildovaldo's rage and valour
Far more do I confide. Miscreant, I grieve
That I have chosen for thy punishment
A far too honourable hand. But what ?
Say, is that punishment accomplish'd yet ?
The issue yet is dubious : and there want not,
Although the men of valour are the friends
Of Ildovaldo, base adventurers
Who, averse to him, for their private views,
Still to the king adhere. This impious man
Has still a multitude of partizans ;
And from the infatuation of his love
Are force and hardihood in him increased . . .
Oh Heaven ! should fortune favour his designs,
Always propitious to the criminal ? . . .

Ah! let me not delay . . . Blind confidence
Might now be detrimental. Speedily,
Guards, drag Romilda hither. From my side
Let her not e'en the distance of one step
Be sever'd now. Oh, precious pledge of peace!
Oh most preposterous origin of discord!
Is she the royal guerdon of the victor?—
If she indeed a royal guerdon be,
Let her come here; to give her is my province.

SCENE THE THIRD.

Rosmunda, Romilda.

Ros. Advance, advance, incomparable virgin;
Come; and securely in my sight remain,
While war is waged for thee in yonder camp.
Come near, approach . . . Thou tremblest?

Rom. Merciful Heaven!
Around the city horrid shrieks are heard,
And seem advancing towards the palace gates . . .
But, ah! with what new fury do I see
Thy troubled countenance inflamed? . . . no more
Is it allowed to me to hope for joy . . .
Only that Ildovaldo is released . . .
Ah! may he yet be living! . . . I beseech thee
From such a doubt deliver me.

Ros. From doubt
Deliver thee, while I myself exist
In deadly doubt: Ah, mayest thou for ever
Drag on a life as horrible and wretched
As these wild hours, by thy means, are to me!
For thee all rush to arms; a second Helen!
A prize unparallel'd! For thee are shed

Rivers of blood to-day : husbands for thee
Are perjured : cowards for thy sake are valiant,
And haughty the dispirited.—Oh thou,
The arbitress of heroes, hither come ;
Sit by my side in queen-like majesty ;
Now in the camp is battle waged for thee,
That thou mayst have a throne . . . or death.

Rom. And what ?

Wouldst thou deride me still ?—art thou not yet
With such unnumber'd insults satisfied ?

Ros. What sayst thou ? I alone am here derided :
Of all my fury, of the just revenge
That I against thee cherish, of my deep
Immitigable jealousy, art thou
Prepared to reap the precious fruits : 'tis I
That crown thee with supreme contentment ; I
That place thee in thy wish'd-for lover's arms.
Thou seest in such a tempest of my heart
What small alleviation words afford.

Me, me thou mockest, and with too just cause.—
I've burst the fetters of thy Ildovaldo ;
And his invincible right hand have arm'd
Already with the sword ; he now fulfils
My just revenge ; and while fulfilling mine,
'Thine, thine a thousand fold he consummates.

Rom. Oh may at least that arm invincible
Be now triumphant ! Thus thou canst alone
Cancel the stigma of thy former crime.
Yes, now a ray of hope illumes my prospect,
Since in the camp, released from shameful fetters,
My Ildovaldo stands. Ah ! may the heavens
Grant thee a life less turbid . . .

Ros. I survive
To drag along a horrible existence,

Whate'er the event. Do thou enjoy my grief;
 Already over thine have I exulted;
 Enjoy that grief since I forbid thee not . . .
 But perhaps . . . What prayers shall I put up to heaven? . . .

I am bewilder'd . . . Hitherto I know
 My supplications have all been for blood;
 Yet do I see no blood that can appease me . . .
 And shall another where I'm cursed be happy?—
 Soon shall we see . . . But who approaches here? . . .

Rom. A little armed band . . . And Ildovaldo
 Is at their head. Oh joy! . . .

SCENE THE FOURTH.

Romilda, Ildovaldo, Rosmunda. The Followers of Ildovaldo.

Rom. Ah! come art thou
 Victorious?—am I thine?

Ros. Hast thou fulfill'd
 The task that I enjoin'd? Hast thou destroyed
 That traitor?

Il. I? He is not for my sword
 A worthy victim. Almachilde fights
 Uselessly in the camp: I have imposed
 The task on other faithful partizans
 To conquer him; an easy task to them.
 Not to a warrior's sword, to a vile axe
 His life is due. On thee I thought alone,
 Romilda; and have consecrated first
 To thee this sword. Come; let me lead thee now
 From these abominable walls. My heroes
 Are competent to clear for thee a passage.

Come with me, thou art truly mine at length.

Ros. Stop : she is not yet thine : I bid thee stop :
I should bestow her with my hand. Romilda,
Thou art mine only while I hold thee here ;
And hence thou shalt not stir. And thou, oh coward,
When I release thee from thy chains, and promise
Whate'er thou wishest in the world, to give thee,
Recreant, dost thou refuse to serve my fury ?
Thou shunn'st, instead of murdering, thy rival ?
For an unmerited reward, while he
Is living, com'st thou here ?

Rom. Oh from her hands
Now drag me quickly, Ildovaldo.

Il. Come,
Cease, oh Rosmunda ; loose her ; 'tis in vain :
Thou canst not now suffice to be a hindrance
To her departure hence. Enough of foes
Has Almachilde ; in his recreant blood
Others will not refuse to soil their hands.
Be not perplex'd, Rosmunda.

Ros. What !—Dost thou
Intend to cheat me ?

Rom. Loose me . . .

Il. Yield, or I . . .

Ros. I loose thee ? no, no, never.—But already
I hear approaching shouts . . . fierce and more fierce,
And nearer they approach . . . Oh joy to me,
If thus perchance thy hope may be deceived !

Rom. Alas, alas !

Il. Who comes thus arm'd ?

Ros. Oh joy !
See Almachilde : I perceive he's victor :
And he, I hope, will punish thee.

SCENE THE FIFTH.

*Almachilde, Ildovaldo, Rosmunda, Romilda, Soldiers,
and Followers of Ildovaldo.*

Il. Com'st thou
In quest of me perchance? Behold me . . .

Al. Check,
My heroes, check your swords: we have atchieved
Enough of slaughter. Let us now desist
From further violence.

Il. It yet remains
For thee to murder me: but first . . .

Ros. Dispatch him.

Al. Hear me, strong Ildovaldo, hear, Romilda.
Retreat from hence, ye soldiers; I command it.
Here all whom I have sought I meet at once.
Thou seest, Ildovaldo, vainly now
Wouldst thou defend thyself against my power.
To every individual of thy train
I can at least oppose an hundred here.
Thou hast to-day my life preserved; to-day
Life I give thee. More thou deservest not.
I will that thou, Romilda, be alone
The arbitress of thy own destiny;
The sovereign of ourselves, and of that woman.
Thou seest now clearly whether I have sought
To plot against thee.

Ros. She my sovereign!
Mine!—In her breast I plunge at once this dagger . . .

Il. Ah! stop . . .

Al. Desist . . .

Ros. Let no one dare approach,
Or I at once the dagger plunge.

Rom. And plunge it :
Thus Ildovaldo's I at least shall die . . .

Ros. Now, which of us is sovereign here ?

Al. Thou . . . thou . . .

Ah, cease . . .

Il. Oh heaven ! . . Distraction . . . Oh Romilda !
And cannot I deliver thee ? . .

Ros. Oh thou
In name alone a king, that sword surrender.

Al. Behold me weaponless . . .

Ros. From forth the palace
Dismiss now all thy soldiers . . .

Al. Go, disperse,
Make haste, all, all . . .

Ros. And thou who didst refuse,
Cold lover, with a crime to acquire thy mistress,
Dismiss thy troops at once.

Il. See, they are vanished.

Ros. So far well done.—Ragauso, instantly
Hither return, and all my armed guards . . .

Al. Come, come, ah quickly, come . . .

Ros. Behold Ragauso.—
—I am, yet I am here then, queen ?

Al. Thou art,
Thou only. Ah ! . .

Il. Accomplish thy revenge
On which of us thou first wouldst immolate . . .
But oh Romilda ! . . Wouldst thou I should die ? . . .
Behold I turn the sword against my breast . . .

Ros. My fury cannot even in your blood

Be now appeased. When I commanded it
Thou shouldest then have aim'd the mortal blow :
Thou knewest well what blood from thee I sought.
But yet, in time, do I repent that I
To thee, base recreant, such a vengeance trusted ;
Or ever placed a confidence in thee,
Poor perjured palterer.—But wholly now,
In my own keeping, chastisement I hold ;
So that I venture to promulgate it
Without reserve.—Oh thou, in whom are centred
All my aversions, who so well as thou
Their ravening turbulence canst satiate ?
Thou almost for my fury may'st suffice.
Fool that I was ! and would I yield thee up
To thy beloved lover ? Thee reserve
For life, who giv'st to me a thousand deaths ?

Il. In pity hear me ! . .

Ros. Tremble.

Rom. Ildovaldo ! . .

Al. Her looks dart death ! . . . To me that sword . .

Ros. In her,

In her I first immerge it. Die ! ¹

Il. Ah ! . . thou

Shalt rather die ! ²

Ros. Soldiers, surround them both.

Rom. My Ildovaldo . . I . . at least . . die . . thine.

Il. To follow thee . .

Al. To avenge thee . .

¹ Stabs Romilda.

² Rushes towards Rosmunda.

Il. To survive thee
Is now impossible.¹ Oh thou avenge her,
Thou who remain'st alive . .

Al. I swear to do it.

Ros. Yet, yet have I the sword ; tremble ; for now
The retribution scarcely is begun,
That in thyself I swear to consummate.

¹ Stabs himself.

OCTAVIA.

A TRAGEDY.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

NERO.

OCTAVIA.

SENECA.

POPPEA.

TIGELLINUS.

SCENE,—The Palace of Nero in Rome.

ACT THE FIRST.

SCENE THE FIRST.

Nero, Seneca.

Sen. Lord of the world, what dost thou covet?

Ne. Peace.

Sen. 'Tis thine, if thou destroy'st it not in others.

Ne. I should possess it fully, if I were not
Bound to Octavia by a hated tie.

Sen. But thou, the Cæsar's successor, couldst thou
Inherit and increase their power and lustre
Without Octavia's hand? 'Twas by her means
That thou enjoyest this throne: yet in a hard
And unjust exile, this Octavia pines;
She, though thus robb'd of thee, although she knows
A haughty rival clasps thee in her arms,

(Unhappy lady!) loves, adores thee yet.

Ne. Grant that she were the instrument to raise
me,

She since has proved the instrument alone
Of my misfortunes ; and e'en now, alas !
Since her divorce, her baneful influence reigns.
The faithless people dare espouse her cause,
Dare speak of her with pity ? dare, oh rage !
Around my very throne to breathe their murmurs ?—
I would not only that Octavia's name
Were never loudly thunder'd in my ears,
But that no trembling lip in timid whispers
Scarce audibly dared mutter it around me.—
—I am not Nero if I suffer this.

Sen. My lord, thou hast not always in contempt
My councils held. Thou knowest well how I
Boldly, with weapons of sage argument,
Have check'd the ardour of thy youthful passions.
I threatened thee with shame, reproach, and mis-
chief,

If thou persisted'st to divorce Octavia,
And from her cruel banishment still worse.
Octavia's image is devoutly cherish'd
In the recesses of the people's hearts :
I told thee this : and added that all Rome
Accounted as ill-omen'd gifts the fields
Of Plautus, and the bloody house of Burrhus,
On her so cruelly expelled, bestowed,
In the esteem of all men, as the types
Of predetermined outrage : and I said . . .

Ne. Amply hast thou exhorted me ; but yet
Thou hast obeyed my will. Perhaps formerly
Thou taughtest me to reign ; but neither thou

Canst teach, nor man can learn, to be exempt
Always from error. Let it now suffice me,
That Rome has given me a timely warning.
'Twas no light fault that I expell'd Octavia,
For never should she have, no never long,
A dwelling far from me . . .

Sen. Thou then of this
Repentest? and 'tis true what I have heard?
Octavia returns?

Ne. Yes.

Sen. Thou dost feel
Pity for her?

Ne. Pity? . . . yes; I feel pity.

Sen. And she will be companion of thy throne,
Perhaps of thy royal bed?

Ne. Within my palace
She now returns. Wherefore, thou wilt behold.
Oh Seneca, thou wise among the wisest,
In manifold emergencies of state
More urgent and more difficult than this,
My guide and minister, I flatter me
Thou wilt not now deceive the implicit trust
That I have placed in thee.

Sen. Counsel from me,
Alas! 'tis ever thus! thou only seekest,
When in thy heart thou hast already fix'd
The fatal sentence. I guess not thy thoughts;
But for Octavia, hearing thee speak thus,
I tremble.

Ne. Tell me, didst thou also tremble
That day when, dragg'd to necessary death,
Her brother fell? And on that day when thou
Didst with thy lips pronounce my haughty mother,

Who was become thy foe, worthy of death,
Say, didst thou tremble?

Sen. What is this I hear?

That infamous, that execrable day
Dar'st thou recall to mind? My hands were not
Bathed in that blood of thine; thou drankest it,
I held my peace; constrain'd, I held my peace,
'Tis true; but from my silence I was guilty,
And shall be while the vital air I breathe.
Fool that I was! I trusted to thee then,
That Nero thus would with maternal blood
Close his career of blood. Now I perceive
This scarce was a beginning. Each renewal
Of thy dire deeds to me brings tribute large
Of hated gifts, with which, I know not why,
Thou hast o'erwhelm'd me. Thou constrainest me
To take them; price of blood thy gifts wilt seem
To the malignant people: ah! resume them;
And leave to me my self-esteem entire.

Ne. If thou possessest it, to thee I leave it.
Thou art expert in all the milder virtues:
But thou art aware, however plausible,
These virtues are not always fit for practice.
If thou didst wish to keep thy fame untouch'd,
And incorrupt thy heart, why didst thou quit,
For this alluring splendour of a court,
Thy obscure birth-place? Thus thou seest that I,
Myself no stoic, can teach thee who art;
And yet my wisdom I owe all to thee.
Since by thy station here thou hast thyself
Impaired thy candour; since the name of good,
When tarnished once, can never be regain'd,
Thou mayest assist me. Of my former faults

Thou hast diminish'd, or wiped off, the foulness ;
Proceed ; applaud and varnish o'er my failings ;
Thy judgment yet is held in some esteem.
Less criminal than other men, the people
Esteem thee yet ; thou always art supposed
Over my heart great influence to possess :
In short, thou'rt so install'd within my palace,
That when thou blamest me, thou blam'st thyself.

Sen. I know it pleases thee that other men
Should bear the burthen of thy trespasses.
A load divided thus becomes more light.
Yes, I, though guiltless of thy numerous crimes,
Bear all their punishment ; and thus incur
That royal privilege—universal hate.
What infamous new task canst thou impose
On me that can increase . . .

Ne. Thou art required
To alienate the people from Octavia.

Sen. The people change not, as their masters do,
Their partialities ; and ill they feign.

Ne. The wise man shapes his language and his
deeds
To the occasion : and art thou not wise ?
Go ; on that day I shall avail myself
Of all thy virtues, whatsoe'er they be,
When I can say the empire is my own.
Meanwhile I am the master of the art,
And thou the pupil, to obtain that power :
See that I find thee pliant to my purpose.
I do not menace thee with death ; I know
That death appals thee not : but of thy fame
The small remains with which thou yet art burthen'd,
Ah think, 'tis all at my supreme disposal.

I can take from thee more than thou possessest.
Be silent then, and aid my purposes.

Sen Absolute words I hear, and words that breathe
Rancour and blood. But I wait the event,
Whatever it may be. To thy designs
All my assistance now is vain and guilty.
Who is not well convinced that Nero now
Suffices unassisted to shed blood?

SCENE THE SECOND.

Nero.

Ne. Thee and thy pomp of simulated virtues,
Proud stoic, I will quell. Till now with gifts
I have contrived to punish thee: I keep
The axe to fall upon thy abject neck
When to the very refuse of the people
I've render'd thee contemptible. What now
Is this my absolute tremendous power,
If on all quarters it is thwarted thus
With fresh impediments? I hate Octavia;
Poppæa I adore beyond all words;
And shall I stoop, I, to dissimulate
Aversion and regard? That privilege
Which to my vilest slaves the law forbids not,
Shall the envious whispers of the multitude
Attempt to-day to interdict to Nero?

SCENE THE THIRD.

Nero, Poppæa.

Pop. Mightiest of monarchs, source of all my joy,
Opprest with care, and banish'd from my sight,

'Thou leavest me to bitter anguish. What,
Shall it ne'er be that I shall witness thee
Blest by our mutual love?

Ne. I, far from thee,
Am sometimes banish'd by our love, Poppæa,
And by our love alone. 'Thee I secured
With long and perilous toil; to keep thee now
I should assiduously strive: thou knowest,
That even at my very sceptre's risk,
I will that thou be mine . . .

Pop. Except thyself,
Who would, who could dissever me from thee?
Each nod of thine, each will of thine, in Rome,
Is law supreme. Thou, as a recompence
Of my regard, bestow'dst thyself on me,
And thou from me may'st take thyself away;
And as thou canst effectively do this,
So could I ne'er survive the loss of thee.

Ne. Take thee from me! Not heaven itself could
do it.

But guilty popular insolence, not yet
Utterly smother'd, dares meanwhile to blame
The affections of my heart: hence I'm constrain'd
To take preventive measures . . .

Pop. And dost thou
That popular insolence heed?

Ne. I hope, ere long,
To shew how much I heed it; but I fain
Would leave without a head this frantic hydra:
Scarce will its last head tumble on the ground,
Whence Rome derives her hope, ere broken, mute,
Torn, and annihilate, to earth will fall
Her haughty multitudes. Rome has not yet

Discover'd Nero's heart ; I from her thoughts
 Her fond traditionary tales of freedom
 Will utterly expel. Octavia, now
 The last survivor of the Claudii,
 Resounds in every mouth ; the multitude,
 In my despite, deplores her destiny,
 Not from affection ; in the people's heart
 Love never enters : but the insolence
 Of popular licentiousness it sooths
 To recollect the weak and infirm sway
 Of inept Claudius, and to sigh for that
 Perversely, which no more they can possess.

Pop. 'Tis true : the tongues of Rome can ne'er
 be silent ;

But have they any power except to prate ?
 Should this alarm thee ?

Ne. For Octavia

A too auspicious place of banishment
 Incautiously I've chosen. For the name
 Of Agrippina, the entire armament
 Now station'd on Campania's shores, retains
 A partial recollection. In their breasts
 Desire of novelty, a specious pity
 For Claudius' daughter, disaffected thoughts,
 And traitrous purposes, have taken root.
 I have ill-chosen such a place of exile ;
 And should do worse in suffering her to stay there.

Pop. And should Octavia in thy mind excite
 Such keen solicitude ? Why not dispatch her
 Beyond the confines of thy mighty empire ?
 What exile more effectual than this,
 If that indeed suffice ? What trackless desert
 Is so remote that it can sever her

Too far from thee, preposterously who dares
To attribute to herself the foolish boast
Of giving thee the throne?

Ne. Till she has lost,
Entirely lost, the power to injure me,
In Rome, and in my palace, she will have
A residence least perilous for me.

Pop. What do I hear? Octavia come to Rome!

Ne. Now hear my arguments.

Pop. Am I then she?...

Ne. Ah! hear me...

Pop. Yes, full well I understand;...
Quickly must I depart...

Ne. Listen to me:

Octavia doth not to thy detriment
Return to Rome: but surely to her own...

Pop. That she returns there to thy detriment,
Quickly wilt thou behold. Meanwhile I tell thee
That not one city, much less then one palace,
While we are living, can at once contain
Octavia and myself. Let her return
That seated Nero on the world's proud throne;
To make him abdicate that throne she comes.
For thee I grieve, not for myself, ah no;
I am most willing to return once more
To my beloved Otho. Much he loved me,
And with no lukewarm fondness loves me still:
Ah that I could contrive to love again
That so devoted lover! But Poppæa
Her heart could ne'er divide; nor would accept
Thy heart divided with her hated rival.
I was enamour'd of thyself alone,
Not of thy throne, and still, alas! I am:

The love, not of the monarch of the world,
But of my much-loved Nero, was to me
An irresistible enticement : then
If but in part thou tak'st thyself from me,
If undividedly I do not reign
In thy great heart, I yield the whole, I yield
And spurn at all the rest. Alas ! could I
Tear as effectively from my fond heart
Thy form, as I'm inflexibly resolved
On total alienation from thy presence.

Ne. Poppæa, I adore thee, this thou knowest ;
With what affection, that which I have done,
And that which I design to do, will prove.
But thou . . .

Pop. What wouldst thou ? Can I at thy side
Behold that odious rival, and remain there ?
Can I admit the thought ? Unworthy lady !
Who knows not how, who will not, cannot love,
And yet dare feign to love.

Ne. Ah tranquillize
Thy mind, thy heart ; banish each jealous fear.
But yet respect my sovereign will. 'Tis now
Impossible that she should not return.
Already she towards Rome advances : here
To-morrow will behold her. Thy repose
Not less than mine demands Octavia's presence.
But why enumerate reasons if *I* wish it ?
I, not accustomed, if my will is fixed,
To meet with obstacles. Believe me, lady,
I am not satisfied with such a love
As thou displayest, of all fear exempt.
Who most obey and fear me, know that they
Love me the best.

Pop. Alas ! my very boldness
 Proceeds from the intensity of fear.
 Oh how much may'st thou injure me ! Thy love
 Thou may'st withdraw from me . . . Ah ! rather first
 Take thou my life : that punishment were milder.

Ne. Poppæa, cease ; confide in my affection.
 Doubt never of my faith ; above all things
 Fear to oppose my will. E'en more than thou,
 Her, whom thou call'st thy rival, I detest.
 Completely sever'd from her turbulent friends,
 Thou here shalt see her by my guards surrounded,
 No more thy rival, but thy abject handmaid.
 And, finally, if I have any skill
 In arts of ruling, she herself shall give thee
 Over herself the entire ascendancy.

ACT THE SECOND.

SCENE THE FIRST.

Poppæa, Tigellinus.

Pop. To-day a common danger we incur ;
 Oh Tigellinus, it behoves us then,
 To-day, to seek a common remedy.

Ti. And what ? Fear'st thou Octavia ? . . .

Pop. Certainly
 Not her allurements ; hitherto have mine
 Prevail'd in Nero's eyes : I apprehend
 Her feign'd affection, her feign'd gentleness ;
 The arts of Seneca, and his reproaches,
 The violence of the people, the remorse
 Of Nero ; these I fear.

Ti. Long has he loved thee,

And dost thou not yet know him? His remorse
Springs from an incapacity to injure.

Believe me now, 'tis but to consummate
A more complete revenge, that he to Rome
Thus draws Octavia. Let it work in him
That innate rancour, fathomless and bitter;
This, added to the inveterate abhorrence
His fruitless bed inspired; these are alone
The sure preventives to our common danger.

Pop. Feel'st thou secure? Not I.—But thy frank
converse

Induces me to speak. I know full well
The soul of Nero; of compunctious workings
It is not capable: but terror, say,
Is terror not omnipotent in him?
Who did not see him tremble at the sight
Of his detested mother? Was he not
Wholly possest with love for me; yet dared he,
While she was living, give to me his hand?
By the mere sternness of his silent scowl
Did not e'en Burrhus awe him? Finally,
Of all power destitute, and garrulous,
Does Seneca sometimes not even yet
Affright him with his magisterial prate?
These are the mirrors, whose reflection forms
The semblance of a conscience. The remorse
Is this, of which I think him capable.
Now add to these the uproar of the rabble,
The menaces of Rome . . .

Ti. These will consign
Octavia more quickly to the fate
Which fell on Agrippina and on Burrhus,
To which so many, many more were doom'd.

Suffer that to his ancient enmity
Fresh fears be added, in a breast like his,
T' inspire the wish, and lastly to mature it,
For the destruction of thy rival. He
Has not discover'd yet to me his thoughts,
But I'm aware that nothing sharpens more
Nero's fierce cunning than his boundless fear.
Rome, clamorous for Octavia, kills Octavia.

Pop. Yes; but meanwhile Octavia may usurp
A transient glimmering of capricious favour?
Octavia hates us both: what would defend thee
From such effective wrath? Th' irresolute,
And frail reluctance of a trembling lord?
One untoward instant may alone suffice
To o'erwhelm us both; what consolation then
To us, if we are doom'd to fall the first,
That she fall after us?

Ti. Fear not, oh no!
That she secure e'en a brief flash of favour.
The way to Nero's heart Octavia knows not.
Her weak parade of austere virtue frets him;
Obedience, love, timidity, in her,
Alike displease him; and that very bait
With which by us he's caught, in her he hates.
But yet, if I can any thing perform,
What ought I now to do?

Pop. Sagaciously
Explore, and warn me of, the smallest trifles;
Exert keen foresight; to his rage bring fuel;
Invent contrivances, propose to Nero
A thousand, for the ruin of my rival;
Tax her with faults where she has none: in short,
As far as thy dexterity suggests,

Apply a thousand means; go, come, assail him,
 Work on his passions, blind them; and watch all-
 ways:—

This shouldst thou do.

Ti. This will I do: fear not:
 But the best instrument for such effects
 Is Nero's own dark heart; he in the lore
 Of vengeance is a master; and, thou knowest,
 If others shew in this an equal skill,
 He is incensed.

Pop. That all conspires to inflame
 His rage, I know full well. With my excess
 Of love erewhile he reprimanded me;
 And spoke to me already of the throne
 Like a ferocious despot.

Ti. Take thou heed
 Not to provoke him ever: o'er his heart
 Thy power is great; but impulses of rage,
 Intoxication of supreme command,
 And a fierce thirst of vengeance, can controul,
 Far more than love, the workings of his heart.
 Depart: he wished to speak with me alone
 In these apartments: all thy interests
 Implicitly confide to Tigellinus.

Pop. I swear to thee, that, if in this thou serv'st
 me,
 None that approach the person of the emperor,
 Shall equal thee in power and confidence.

SCENE THE SECOND.

Tigellinus.

Ti. 'Tis certain, if Octavia triumph'd now,

That fatal injury would result to us.
Nero himself assures me. Too intense
Is his disdain ; Octavia's innocence
Too manifest ; no refuge has she left.
Yet I'm constrain'd to summon up to-day
All my dexterity. I must persuade him
That all his fear is provident precaution ;
And make him fancy that the guiltiest vengeance
Would be pronounced, even by sages, just.
Lord of the world, I hold thee ; I alone
Hold thee, and absolutely. To myself
Shall it belong, in time, t' intimidate
And to encourage thee. Woe, if thou lose
This salutary fear ! To evil deeds,
What further impulse, or to virtuous deeds,
What further hindrance would remain to thee ?

SCENE THE THIRD.

Nero, Tigellinus.

Ti. Great emperor, why didst thou not come before ?

Thou wouldst have heard the sobbings of a lady,
Who loves thee too intensely. In the bosom,
The true and tender bosom of Poppæa,
A conflict fierce, doubt, fear, and love, have waged.
A lady who adores thee so, canst thou
Thus cruelly afflict ?

Ne. She will not see,
Blinded by unjust jealousy, the truth.
I love her only . . .

Ti. This I've said to her ;
But who could better calm the bitter pangs

Of jealous fear than a beloved lover ?
From her, ah hide, in pity to her sex,
That terrible majesty, that in thy face
Conspicuous shines. Thou with a word, a smile,
A look, couldst calm the tempest that assails
Her trembling heart. I, in thy name, have dared
To swear to her, that in thyself the thought
Hath never entered to abandon her.
That, though I know them not, for mighty reasons,
Thou summonedest Octavia to Rome ;
But never to Poppæa's detriment.

Ne. My faithfullest interpreter, for me
The truth thou swarest. This I also swore
To her : but deaf she stood. What avail words ?
The day that rises, will, perchance, scarce be
Completed, ere Octavia's destiny
Shall be, and irrecoverably, seal'd.

Ti. May all thy cares be wound up in her fate,
Provided thou wouldst condescend to prove
How criminal she is to Rome.

Ne. To Rome ?

As guilty as 'tis possible to be
Is she, since I abhor her. Is it needful
That I by proofs legitimate my will ?

Ti. 'Tis but too needful. Thou canst not yet hold
The impious multitude in the contempt
Which it deserves. 'Tis true, it held its peace
At Agrippina's and at Claudius' pyres :
That of Britannicus it saw in silence :
Yet at Octavia's fate it dares to-day
Murmur and weep. Reveal Octavia's crimes,
And all men will be mute.

Ne. I never loved her ;

She evermore displeased and wearied me ;
She had the boldness to lament her brother ;
I saw her too implicitly obey
The turbulent Agrippina : oft to me
I heard her name her sceptred ancestors :
These are atrocious crimes, and they suffice..
On her already have I sentence passed :
To execute it there is nothing wanting
Except her presence. That she is no more
Rome shall discover : this is the account
Which of my purpose I shall give to Rome.

Ti. Emperor, thou mak'st me tremble for thyself.
It is not prudent in thee thus to brave
The boisterous people. If thou canst on her
With justice death inflict, why wouldst thou now
That she of thy despotic will alone
Should seem the victim ? Were it not more wise
Of her authentic crimes to drag to light
The most enormous ? As she is, in fact,
To prove her guilty, while she is esteemed,
Reproachless ?

Ne. Other . . . more enormous . . . crimes ?

Ti. No man presumed to mention them to thee :
But should they be concealed from thee, since now
She is, by her legitimate divorce,
No more thy consort ? The unworthy lady
Yet held her station in thy court ; with thee
Yet shared thy bed and throne ; and yet usurp'd
The homage due to an imperial princess ;
When lower than the most abandon'd woman
She had herself degraded ; when, alas !
She had conceived the thought to prostitute
To a vile minstrel, that had caught her eye,

Her noble blood, her honour, and herself,
And her imperial ancestors . . .

Ne. Oh infamy !

Ti. The slave Eucerus pleased her : hence she
bore

Her banishment from Rome, and her divorce,
With so much resignation. He sufficed
Amplly to compensate for Nero's loss ;
Companion, and inseparable solace,
He, of her exile was ; . . . why call it exile ?
The soft Campania, exquisite retreat,
In their voluptuous wallowings shelter'd them.
There on the flowery turf, or on the brink
Of crystal stream, she listened to the notes
Now drawn in symphony from the sweet lyre
By his effeminate hand, in concert now
To his melodious voice : hence she resign'd
The dazzling splendour of her former state
Without regretful thoughts.

Ne. Could she belie

The blood of Messalina, who her birth
From her derived ?—Now say ; could proofs be
brought

To certify the deed ?

Ti. Yes ; to this fact

Are more than one of her attendants privy ;
And, if appeal'd to, would depose the truth.
If e'er Octavia had possess'd thy love,
I ne'er had spoken thus. What do I say ?
Had she possess'd, had she deserved thy heart,
Such an offence she ne'er could have imagined,
Much less have perpetrated. To thy arms,
Reasons of state, in spite of thy dislike,

At first consigned her. Well she knew herself
Of thee unworthy ; hence her abject heart
Thus abjectly she fix'd.

Ne. But yet I fear
That were I now to opprobrious light to drag
This obscure crime . . .

Ti. Their's is the infamy
Who did the crime.

Ne. 'Tis true.

Ti. Thus their deserts
Will all obtain : she that of culpable ;
Thou that of just ; and so thou mayest be
Without incurring risk.

Ne. Thou speakest wisely.
Be bold in deeds as thou art wise in words.

SCENE THE FOURTH.

Seneca, Nero, Tigellinus.

Sen. Emperor, already hath Octavia passed
Thy royal threshold : whether I to thee
Bring unpropitious or propitious news,
I cannot tell. But no one emulous
Of such a task, anticipates my coming :
A luckless omen this.

Ne. Go, Tigellinus ;
My orders execute :—and thou retrace
Thy previous footsteps ; meet Octavia, tell her
That I await her coming here alone.

SCENE THE FIFTH.

Nero.

Ne. Guilty, and greatly guilty, is Octavia;
What doubt is there of that? I grieve alone
That I suggested not this project first
Thus to convict her. Can it then be so—
That Nero should from others learn the art
To crush an enemy? But the day comes
When to get rid of those that I abhor,
A signal from my throne will be sufficient.

SCENE THE SIXTH.

Nero, Octavia.

Oct. In the deep horrors of a gloomy night
By armed guards surrounded, I am dragged
Into this very palace, whence I saw
Myself, two months ago, by violence torn.
May I presume now of my lord to ask
The cause of this?

Ne. For lofty purposes
Our parents joined us in connubial ties
From our most tender years. Yet since that time
I never saw thee, as thou wert in words,
Conformable in actions to my will:
For a long time thy contumely I bore;
And should, perchance, have borne it longer, hadst
thou
Made me the father of a royal offspring,
Numerous and lovely; in whose cheering presence
I might have found some solace to my cares.

I hoped for this in vain ; a sterile plant
By thee the throne remain'd devoid of heirs ;
By thee my hopes of being a father cross'd.
Hence I divorced thee.

Oct. Emperor, thou didst well ;
Provided that another happier consort
Than I, alas ! e'er was, could render thee
The joyful father of a numerous offspring.
I know thou hast not found, nor e'er wilt find,
One that, as I love, loves thee. What of this ?
Have I perchance e'er murmur'd at thy will ?
Seeing my husband in another's arms,
I've wept, and still I weep. Except my tears
And silence, and obsequiousness and sighs,
Has aught been heard from me ?

Ne. Perpetual sweetness
Dwells on thy lips ; but not within thy heart.
Thy words betray thy rancour : ill thou hidest
The anger thou conceivest in thy breast
Against Poppæa. And far less hast thou
Concealed thy other proud remembrances
Of unauthentic rights.

Oct. Ah, couldst thou
Also forget, as much as I forget
These not imaginary rights of mine,
Since no imaginary ills they cost me ! . . .
Hatred and fury glisten in thy eyes.
Ah ! I too plainly see that thou dost hate me,
More vehemently hate me, than a husband
From mere sterility could hate a wife.
Unhappy lady that I am ! I most,
When most I love thee, have offended thee.
What have I asked of thee ? What ask I now ?

An obscure and a solitary life,
And liberty to weep.

Ne. And I, indeed,
Assured that thou wouldst in an obscure life
Be better satisfied, to thee prescribed
That life; but afterwards . . .

Oct. But afterwards
Thou didst repent of this: didst feel remorse
Since I was not sufficiently unhappy.
Thou wishest me to live a witness here
Of thy new ties: thou wishest me to be
The handmaid of thy consort: to the world
A laughing-stock; derision of thy court.
Behold me then submissive to thy will:
What should I do? Speak. Issue thy commands.
Yet even in thy court entirely wretched
Thou canst not make me, if with my misfortunes
I satisfy thy heart. Say, art thou happy?
Reigns in thy heart a placid calm? Dost thou
Beside another spouse that tranquil sleep,
Of which thou robbest me, securely taste?
Does that Poppæa, whom, like me, thou hast not
Robbed of a brother, more than did Octavia
Ensure thy happiness?

Ne. At what a price
Thou ought'st to hold his heart who rules the world,
Thou never knewest, and Poppæa knows.

Oct. Poppæa knows how to esteem the throne
To which she was not born: I to esteem
Thyself: nor can she ever try to cope
With me in loving thee. She has, 'tis true,
Obtain'd thy heart; but I alone deserve it.

Ne. No, no, thou canst not love me.

Oct. Rather say,
That I ought not to love thee: but from thine
Judge not thou of my heart. I know, that now
The blood from which I spring, except in me,
Is everlastingly extinct; I know
That in my heart, thy image, with the blood
Of all my family contaminate,
Ought never to have found a place: but this
Is force of destiny. Now, if my brother,
My father, slain by thee, I ne'er remember,
Dar'st thou allege against me as a crime
That brother and that father?

Ne. As a crime,
The vile Eucerus I allege against thee.

Oct. To me? . . . Eucerus!

Ne. Yes; to thee Eucerus;
The lover thou deservest.

Oct. Ah, just Heaven!
Dost thou hear this?

Ne. There are who dare to charge thee
As guilty of adulterous servile love:
For this alone I bring thee back to Rome.
Prepare thyself for which thou likest best,
Or to refute it, or to suffer for it.

Oct. Oh unexampled, horrible imposture!
Where is the infamous accuser? . . . Ah . . .
Fool that I am, what questions do I ask?
Nero accuses, judges, and condemns.

Ne. Behold thy boasted love! . . . Yes, yes, the
poison
At last flows freely from thy bursting heart;
Now that I have, at least in part, discover'd
Thy secret turpitude.

Oct. Ah wretched me! . . .
What more remains for me? Driven from my bed,
My throne, my palace, and my country; this
Suffices not! . . . Oh Heaven! my fame alone
Remain'd to me entire; alone consoled me
For every ravish'd good: this precious treasure
In vain, by her who lightly prized her own,
Was seen with envy: now or ere my life,
My fading life is gone, my fame is tarnished.
Haste, haste, oh Nero, why dost thou delay?
Peace, (if that blessing ever can be thine,)
Peace, I know well, thou never wilt enjoy
So long as I exist: can the means fail thee
To slay a helpless and a friendless lady?
Within the deep recesses of this palace,
The fatal dark abode of fraud and death,
Drag me at will: and let me there be slain.
Moreover, thou thyself may'st with thy hands
Cut short my life: not only will my death
Please thee, but it is necessary now.
Ah be appeased then with my death alone.
All other slaughter of my friends already
I have forgiven thee; I now forgive
The slaughter of myself; yes, kill, reign on,
And kill again: thou know'st all means of death;
Already Rome is skilful in the art
Of blazoning forth thy crimes in virtues' symbols;
What dost thou fear? In me of all the Claudii
The last survivor dies; all the remembrance,
And all the love the people ever bore them.
The gods are now accustomed to the fumes
Of thy ensanguined incense; at their altars
Still the memorials hang of every death:

And private massacres have been to thee
As trophies and as triumphs. Let my death
Suffice then to appease thee : why allege,
When death I do not shun, nay ask of thee,
Aspersions as iniquitous as false ?

Ne. For thy defence I wholly yield to thee
This dawning day. If thou art innocent
'Twill give me joy. My hate thou need'st not fear,
But thy own crime, which far surpasses it.

SCENE THE SEVENTH.

Octavia.

Oct. Ah wretched me ! . . . Ah cruel Nero, fed,
For ever fed with blood, yet always craving.

ACT THE THIRD.

SCENE THE FIRST.

Octavia, Seneca.

Oct. Oh Seneca, approach ; let me at least
Shed tears with thee : hard lot ! I find not one,
Not one to pity, and to weep with me.

Sen. Lady, and is it true ? This infamous
And lying accusation . . .

Oct. Save this last
Dire outrage, all from Nero I expected ;
And this alone increases all my suffering.

Sen. Were ever folly and atrocity
So mingled in fatuity of guilt ?
Thou paragon of innocence and faith,
Thou modest, gentle, and compassionate,

Thou, though accustomed to consort with Nero,
Pure and unspotted : shalt thou of thy fame
Be thus despoil'd ? Oh no, it shall not be !
I yet exist, the living evidence
Of all thy virtue ; Rome shall hear me yet
Proclaim thee innocent with my last breath :
What heart so hard as not to pity thee ?
Ah ! tell me not (what words can ill express)
How bitter are thy tears : I feel it all,
And share thy grief.

Oct. But thou dost hope in vain.
Nothing, till he has robb'd me of my fame,
Does Nero deem that he has taken from me.
All at his mercy lies : thyself wouldst share
Ruin, and all in vain : ah ! thou indeed
Makest me tremble for thyself. But yet
Thy fame beyond the reach of man is placed
By a long series of virtuous deeds :
Ah, were it so with mine ! . . . But young, a woman,
In a flagitious court brought up, oh Heaven !
Guilty I may be deemed of shameful crimes.
The world believes not, nor should it believe,
That I preserve a love for Nero still :
Yet though a thousand times in thousand forms
He has infix'd the dagger in my breast,
Still is the seeing that he loves another
The grief surpassing every other grief.

Sen. Nero still spares my life : I know not why ;
Nor do I know what destiny of mine
Withdraws me from the track that Burrhus trod,
And a few others eminent for virtue,
That he has slain. Yet Nero, though he spare,
Has not yet cancell'd from his book of death

My proscribed name. Already had my hand
Cut the precarious thread of my frail life,
Had not the hope restrain'd me (ah deceived,
And scarce remaining hope!) that I one day
Might reconduct him to the path of virtue.
Yet, at the risk of this poor span of life,
At least I hope to rescue from his hand
Some innocent. Ah, mightest thou be she!
Oh might I spare thee infamy at least!
Having done this, oh, how exultingly
Should I expire!

Oct. At once I laid aside
All thoughts of life when I these thresholds pass'd.
Not that I fear not death; whence should I gain
Such strength of mind? 'Tis true, I fear to die:
And yet I wish it; and, with anxious thought,
I turn to thee, thou master in the science.

Sen. Ah! . . . think . . . Thou tear'st my heart . . .

Oct. Thou canst alone
Deliver me; from infamy at least . . .
Infamy! now thou seest whence it falls
On me: Poppæa dares impute to me
The most disgraceful love.

Sen. Oh worthy spouse
Of cruel Nero!

Oct. Virtue certainly
Does not enamour him: audacious, free,
And overbearing manners, act on him,
At once, as an incentive and a yoke:
Tenderness wearies him. What have I not done
To please him? I respected, as a law,
His smallest intimation; and held sacred
His every wish. Clandestinely I wept

My murdered brother ; for that act of his,
If from my lips Nero obtain'd no praise,
Censure he never heard. I wept in silence ;
And feign'd to think him guiltless of that blood :
But to no purpose : 'twas my cruel fate,
Whatever I attempted, to displease him.

Sen. Could Nero ever love thee if thou wert not
Impious and cruel ? Calm thyself a little.
The day now dawns. Soon as the multitude
Of thy return shall hear, 'twill wish to see thee,
And give thee proofs of its entire attachment.
From it I draw much hope ; at thy departure
Its outcries were most turbulent ; nor ceased
During thy absence discontented whispers.
Greatly depraved, but still more greatly fearful,
All that he would do, Nero dare not do.
He fears the people. Fierce and proud he is ;
Yet hitherto the throne beneath him totters :
And perhaps one day . . .

Oct. What noise is this I hear ?

Sen. Methinks the people . . .

Oct. They approach the palace . . .

Oh heavens !

Sen. The cries of an insurgent people
I seem to hear.

Oct. What will become of us ?

Sen. What fearest thou ? We are the only persons
That in this horrible palace need not tremble . . .

Oct. Louder and louder does the tumult swell.
Ah wretched me ! Perhaps Nero is in danger . . .
But who do I behold ?

Sen. Nero ; he comes.

Oct. In his ferocious and ensanguined eyes,
Oh ! with what rage he burns !—I tremble . . .

SCENE THE SECOND.

*Nero, Octavia, Seneca.**Ne.* Who,

Perfidious woman, who art thou, that thus
All Rome is up in arms at thy return,
And dares to shout thy name? What dost thou here?
What plottest thou with that pernicious traitor?
Ye both are in my power. The foolish people
In vain demands to see thee. Ah! I hope,
At least, if I am forced to it, as thou
Deservest to be shewn, to shew thee dead.

Oct. Dispose of me, oh Nero, as thou wilt.
But of each popular commotion, ah!
Believe that I am innocent. I ask,
(I swear to thee) I neither ask, nor hope,
Aught from the people's love: in spite of me,
When it might injure thee, do thou prevent
Th' involuntary error by my death.

Ne. I would that every one, or ere thou'rt punished,
Should know thee as thou art, a malefactor.

Sen. And dost thou hope the people to deceive
With such a base untruth?

Ne. Thou also, thou,
Thou cowardly fomentor of disturbance,
Which thou thyself avoidest; occult source
Of these rebellious movements; thou shalt be
Ere long the puny victim of my vengeance.

SCENE THE THIRD.

Nero, Octavia, Tigellinus, Seneca.

Ti. Emperor . . .

Ne. What bring'st thou, Tigellinus? speak.

Ti. More and more fervently the tempest rages:
Thy judgment must apply the remedy.
Scarce heard the people that a sovereign mandate
Recall'd Octavia to Rome, than each
Is emulous to see her. Foolishly
They deem that thou hast changed thy first resolve:
And there are who assert that thou again
Hast in thy bed received her. Wild with joy,
These in the capitol prefer their vows;
On the neglected statues of Octavia
Those replace chaplets of triumphal laurel:
Others, with transport drunk, dare to cast down
Those of Poppæa; their audacity
So far has risen, that, 'mid cries and shouts,
Dragg'd in the dust and filth indignantly,
Broken they lie. With epithets of scorn
They execrate her name: and to the skies,
Nero, with acclamations loud, extol:
The greater part demands Poppæa's exile;
And some more cruel imprecate her death.
Triumphant hymns, and threatenings, thou wilt hear;
Then prayers and threats again, and prayers once
more.

Each bosom burns: authority is fled.
The soldiers and commanders tried to stem|
The irresistible, impetuous torrent:
In vain they tried; a moment saw them all

Confused, dispersed, discomfited, or slain.

What shall we do? What is thy sovereign will?

Ne. What shall we do? . . . The people must behold

This their Octavia:—Let her then be slain.

Oct. See my defenceless bosom: if it please thee
Slay me at once. Ah, may my blood appease thee.
Shew me to th' inflamed multitude when dead:

Thou wilt at once, by doing this, repress

All culpable rejoicing. Let the urn,

This is my sole request, receive my relics,

That holds the ashes of Britannicus.

So may thy throne find in our monument

A sacred and an everlasting base.

Why dost thou now delay? receive my life;

I owe it to thy fury.

Sen. If at once

Thou wouldst to-day both lose thy throne and life,

Certain the method is: Octavia slay.

Ne. At all events on her I would take vengeance.

Oct. Not only one death, I would have a thousand,
Ere the least detriment I caused to Nero.

Ti. But the time presses more and more. Hear'st
thou

Those savage howlings? I have never seen

So furious an attack; and so much less

Surmountable, as 'tis th' effect of joy.

'Tis needful to decide.

Oct. Can it be doubtful?

Nero, henceforward, to prevent all tumult,

'Tis indispensable to slay or love me.

The one, thou couldst not even feign to do;

The other, for a long time thou hast wished:

Let courage crown thy wish ; slay me ; be bold ;
Or if this be not the propitious moment
For such decision, temporize awhile ;
Thou easily may'st do it. Credulous
The people are, and if their sudden movements
Be from their channel turn'd, their force is lost.
This will be easy ; 'twill alone suffice
That I with placid looks present myself,
As in thy favour I were reinstated ;
That I but feign that I am thine. The crowd
Will thus be soon dispersed ; all tumult quell'd.
Thus to unsheathe thy sword wilt thou gain time,
And to destroy thy victims.

Ne. Yes, to Rome
Will I present thee : but first will discover
Whether I am in Rome the real master.
Thou, Tigellinus, to the camp repair ;
Silently the pretorian bands assemble ;
Thence with a terrible, unexpected force,
On the refractory fall ; and by the death
Of whomsoe'er thou meetest mark thy steps.

Ti. I will attempt it ; though the consequence
Be most precarious. 'Twill, indeed, appear
A harsh expedient to repress with swords
A sudden gust of joy. And should it turn
To indignation ? brief is the transition.
'Tis no light task to cope with a whole city :
Suppose that with my partisans I fall ;
Who then remains in thy defence ?

Ne. 'Tis true . . .
But yet to yield would seem . . .

Ti. Now trust to me :
Do not incur a mighty danger lightly :

Thy single presence might perchance at once
Disperse them all.

Ne. The guardian of Octavia
I remain here. In my name do thou go,
Shew thyself to them : what the people are
Thou knowest well ; to temporize with them
Will be the worst. At thy discretion feign,
Grant, promise, cheat, destroy, and put in practice
Gold, terror, weapons, flattery, menaces,
So that they be o'ercome. Go, fly, return.

SCENE THE FOURTH.

Nero, Octavia, Seneca.

Ne. Woe on thee, Seneca, if from this palace
Thou dost attempt to stir ! but keep thyself
Out of my sight, let my eyes never see thee.
Meanwhile prefer at will nefarious vows ;
Hope and desire ; thy day of retribution
Also approaches quickly.

Sen. I expect it.

SCENE THE FIFTH.

Nero, Octavia.

Ne. And thou, Octavia, this thy final triumph
Fully enjoy ; for soon . . .

Oct. The day, too late,
Will also come when thou wilt know Octavia.

SCENE THE SIXTH.

Poppæa, Nero, Octavia.

Pop. Say, Nero, hast thou placed me at thy side,
And on thy throne, that I should be the scorn,
The laughing-stock of thy audacious people?
But what do I behold? while I am thus
The victim of derision, unavenged,
Irresolute, and silent dost thou stand
In presence of the author of thy wrongs?
In truth, fit master of the world is Nero!
Yet notwithstanding does the multitude
Prefer his wife to him.

Oct. Thou hast alone
The heart of Nero: what dost thou then fear?
I, a vile prisoner, I the hostage am
Of the audacious people's wavering faith.
Do thou rejoice: soon as all things are calm,
The transient wounds of thy ambitious heart
Will find a sovereign balsam in my blood.

Ne. Soon will thy shameful deeds be brought to
light;
The paltry idol Rome will soon behold
Which for herself she raised. Thy outrages,
Poppæa, will to honour be ascribed;
Her honours only to her infamy.

Oct. And if there are who could convict Octavia,
By fair and open proofs, of infamy,
I have already in my secret heart
Chosen Poppæa as my only judge;
To thee do I appeal. Thou knowest well
What criminality it is to change

The affections of the heart, what punishment
 Those who are guilty of the crime deserve.
 But I am innocent, alas! too much so,
 E'en in your eyes. Yes, quit my presence, thou
 Who standest here so haughty in thy virtue;
 Thou darest not e'en now sustain my looks.

Ne. How dar'st thou thus? Respect thy emperor's wife;

And tremble...

Pop. Heed her not. She chuses well
 In me her judge: what judge can she e'er find
 More merciful? What other punishment
 To her who has betray'd my Nero's love,
 What other punishment can I inflict
 Than that of losing him eternally?
 What punishment to thee can be more light?
 That vulgar love, which thou in vain concealest,
 Thou hast obtain'd my free consent to publish.
 Yes, worthy mistress of Eucerus, I
 Would worthily to him affianced thee.

Oct. Alas! Eucerus only is a veil
 To guilt compared with which e'en he is noble.
 But I with thee contend not: to that honour
 I was not born; I am not so audacious...

Ne. To whom art thou now equal? Thy base
 flame
 Makes thee more vile than e'en the vilest handmaid:
 Yes, from thy rank, and from thy noble birth,
 Thou art entirely fallen.

Oct. Less wouldst thou hate me,
 If I had fallen thus to the lowest pitch;
 Or if thou couldst believe it. But I yield,
 If thus thou wilt, every thing to thee

Except my innocence. Oh, cruel Nero,
Nor can I cease, whate'er thou be'st, to love thee,
Nor for that love to blush : immense disgrace,
'Tis true, I feel it to proclaim myself
The rival of Poppæa : but I am not ;
Never did she love thee : thy rank, thy throne,
And all the splendour that encircles thee,
These, and not Nero, have secured her heart.

Ne. Perfidious woman, now, e'en now . . .

Oct. And thou,
When I began to love thee, such thou wert not :
Perhaps thou wert born for virtue : never, never
Didst thou discover in thy early years
Such dire propensities. Who has thus changed
Thy nature, changed thy heart ? she that bewitch'd
Thy faculties ; she first instructed thee
To thirst for blood ; she is the curse of Rome.
My own wrongs I suppress, which are the least ;
But by thy means the very Tyber runs
Distain'd with blood ; brother, and mother . . .

Ne. Cease,
Be silent, leave me, or I . . .

Pop. Does she merit
The indignation of my lord ? Abuse
Is the accustomed idle subterfuge
Of the convicted. If she could offend me,
Or thou couldst yield belief to what she says,
One of her words alone had wounded me.
What said she ? that I love thee not ? thou knowest . .

Oct. Better than he thou know'st it ; he would
know it
If he should lose the throne ; then would he fully
Behold thee as thou art. Ah why, oh throne,

The only cause that Nero hates me thus,
Wert thou my cradle? Ah! why sprung I not
From obscure blood? to thee had I then been
Less hateful, less suspected, less displeasing.

Ne. To me less hateful? Thou wert always so,
And now thou art much more so: but that hate
Will now be transient.

Pop. And if I boast not
Imperial ancestors, dost thou infer
My blood is thence obscure? Yet if it were,
'Twere a sufficient solace not to be
Daughter of Messalina.

Oct. My forefathers
Sat on the throne; from thence to all the world
Their failings are divulged; but who e'er heard
Of thy obscure and unknown ancestors?
Yet if betwixt us any one should dare
To make comparisons, could he allege
Against Octavia an exchange of husbands?
Am I perchance the refuse of a Rufus,
Or of an Otho?

Ne. For a little while,
Of death art thou the refuse. Now, the mode
Of thy destruction is alone uncertain;
Thou canst but change it for the worse.—Depart;
Meanwhile keep thou to thy apartments; go;
And let me no more hear thee.

SCENE THE SEVENTH.

Nero, Poppæa.

Ne. Learn, Poppæa,
To know thyself, to know thy Nero, better.

Should I abandon Rome to fire and sword,
And should I bury with myself my throne,
I swear to thee, this outrage is the last
That thou shalt bear from her ; nor from my hands
Shall she be ever rescued.—Calm thyself ;
Resume thy confidence ; confide in me . . .

Pop. I have no fear except to die not thine . . .

Ne. Ah ! cease. 'The tumult rapidly has risen,
And quickly will subside : I also now
Prepare myself for action. Be secure ;
Of all the indignities that thou hast suffer'd,
Me wilt thou speedily behold th' avenger.

ACT THE FOURTH.

SCENE THE FIRST.

Poppæa, Seneca.

Pop. Of me what wouldst thou ?

Sen. Pardon me, I come
Inopportunately ; but, perchance, I come
For thy advantage.

Pop. Wherefore, now, in thee
Springs such solicitude for my advantage ?
Say, wert thou ever, art thou now, my friend ?
What other reason than to injure me ? . . .

Sen. I never would, assuredly, assist thee,
Did not the means of least risk to Octavia,
With means of thy advantage, coalesce.
Pity for th' innocent, illustrious lady,
A love of justice, and long weariness
Of my disgraceful and unfruitful life,
Lead me to speak ; and from no other source

Except thy interest, claim I, or expect,
From thee a patient hearing.

Pop. Let us hear :
What canst thou say to me ?

Sen. That thou wilt soon
Become displeasing to the heart of Nero,
If he perceive the multitude persist
Tenaciously in hating thee. In this
I speak to thee the truth : I know Poppæa,
Nero, the times, and Rome.

Pop. Thou knowest all
Except thyself.

Sen. Men at my death will see
Whether I know myself. Hear me meanwhile ;
Hear me, I pray thee. To thy own destruction,
With too much wishing to destroy Octavia,
Thou hastenest now. Rome taxes thee alone
Both with her exile and divorce : to thee
'Twill always be ascribed, if infamy,
Or greater punishment await her. Hence
The aversion 'gainst thyself, intense already,
The rancorous whisperings, a thousand-fold
Will be increased. The people, mutinous,
Are not dispersed ; yet, grant that it were so,
Does not the day return in which 'twill be
Still more tremendous ? Tremble for thyself,
Poppæa ; for thy Nero has a heart,
If self-defence required the sacrifice,
To immolate the whole to save himself.
Perhaps a light obstacle allures to love ;
But quickly one that's insurmountable
Destroys it in a bosom not sublime.
Then flatter not thyself : for Nero holds

(And for a long time has he held) the throne,
Far, far more precious than thy love, or thee.
And woe on thee, if he is forced by Rome,
To chuse betwixt you both.

Pop. And I hold Nero
Far, far more precious than the throne. If I
Fear'd, on my own account, to risk his safety . . .
But, what dost thou suggest? Is Nero not
The absolute lord of Rome? and shall he heed
A vile and apprehensive multitude,
Which silently, implicitly, obeyed
Tiberius and Caligula?

Sen. Thou shouldst heed it,
If thou wilt not that Nero for himself
Should tremble at it ; yes, defy all fear,
Remove the last remaining check from Nero ;
And thou of this wilt be the first to feel
The sad effects. Useless is all the blood
Which solemnized thy fatal nuptial rites,
If ye dare add to-day Octavia's blood.
Reflect on Agrippina : her fierce son
She loved, but well she knew him ; she would never,
From the apprehension of his rival brother,
Never exempt him. His ferocious cunning
At last prevail'd ; and the unhappy youth
Imbibed the guilty poison in his breast.
Vain were the mother's arts, and soon for them
She paid herself the penalty. From thence
More resolute in crime, Nero we saw
Day after day more deeply plunge in blood.
Octavia now remains to such a monster
The only check ; Octavia, Nero's terror,
Idol of Rome. Octavia take away ;

Let him possess thee in tranquillity ;
 Soon wilt thou see him cloy'd. He loves thee now,
 Because he has purchased thee with so much blood ;
 But if a danger, though a feeble one,
 Thou cost him, love is gone. Ah then expect
 That meed of which Nero was never sparing ;
 To those who love him most, the death most cruel.

Pop. He comes ; proceed.

Sen. 'Tis what I most desire.

SCENE THE SECOND.

Nero, Poppæa, Seneca.

Ne. Obey'st thou thus my prohibition, rebel? . . .

Pop. Ah come ! ah come ! and thou shalt hear . . .

Ne. Hear what ?

Ere long and he shall also hear from me
 The self-same arguments which I prepare
 For all the people. But, oh rage ! E'en yet
 That execrable tumult ceases not :
 Fruitless are prayers : ere long the sword shall come,
 And it shall clear away an ample passage.
 Poppæa, calm thy spirits : thou shalt see
 Thy images to-morrow rise again
 To heaven : and in the same filth, but bedaubed
 With noisome, sable gore, thou shalt behold
 Thy rivals dragged.

Pop. Whate'er from this ensues,
 Let Rome from thee now know that I have not
 From thee exacted blood to expiate
 This offered outrage ; though it cost me much
 To bear it. Yet the guilty people dares
 Allege against me cruel views ; and he,

This thy preceptor, dares to second them,
Though he believe them not. Thee I attest,
Thee, my first deity, of this: thou knowest
If I from thee have ever asked for aught
Except Octavia's exile. Evermore
To see her near me, who, without desert,
My Nero first possest, afflicted me:
But, with her exile satisfied, I deem'd
That she, for her so many crimes, received,
In losing thee, an ample punishment;
A punishment which I . . .

Ne. Let Seneca,
And, with him, let the vulgar prate at will.
Soon by convincing proofs I'll shew to Rome
What this her idol is.

Sen. Nero, take heed;
It is more easy for thee to alarm,
Than to cheat Rome: the one thou oft hast done;
The other never.

Ne. But of thee, thou knowest,
I often have avail'd myself to cheat her;
And thou in this wert tractable . . .

Sen. I too
Was often culpable; but I abode
In Nero's court.

Ne. Vile slave! . . .

Sen. I was, so long
As I was silent; but now the day arises
When I unloose, to words ne'er heard before,
My tongue, no longer parasitical.
'Tis true, that words will be a poor atonement
For my delinquency; but perhaps my fame
May be recovered by a lofty death.

Ne. I will give thee the fame thou meritest.

Sen. While still I hear the murmurs of the people,
Which by the salutary check of fear
Softens thy fury, thou'rt constrain'd to bear me.
Meanwhile my heart exults to irritate
Thy haughty passions; and to make thee hear,
So make thee hear, the truth; that when again
Thy courage thou resumest, I shall fall
Its victim first; and if on me the blow
Of thy revenge first fall not, on Octavia,
I swear to thee, it never shall descend.
The already mutinous people I can raise,
And to more fury I can raise than ever;
I can and will fully reveal to them
Our infamous contrivances; and thus,
More than thou thinkest, to the extremest edge
Of fathomless perdition hurry thee.—
I was the counsellor of Nero once;
And mail'd my heart for him in borrow'd steel;
I, grovellingly, believed to flatter him,
Or rather feign'd belief, (alas too much!)
That circumventive arts for the lost throne
Rightfully cost Britannicus his life;
That Agrippina, since she gave to thee
The throne, was guilty; Plautius, and Silius,
Guilty in being reputed worthy of it;
And lastly feign'd that Burrhus too was guilty
From having many times preserved it for thee.
But guilty more than all the rest I deem'd,
And still I deem myself: and will proclaim it,
In life and death proclaim it openly,
To every creature that my voice can reach.
Sate thy rage on me; thou mayest securely;

But tremble, Nero, if thou slay'st Octavia :
To thee I do announce it, all her blood
Will turn, with large addition, to o'erwhelm thee.—
I've spoken ; it behoved me once to speak.—
Thou wilt hereafter in reply bestow
On me—and at thy greatest leisure—death.

SCENE THE THIRD.

Nero, Poppæa.

Pop. Emperor, appease thy rage . . .

Ne. For words like these

I'll make thee pay ere long.—Oh insolence ! . .
Then am I here of all men least, the slave
Of every braggard, till my army come ?
Of contradictory and diverse schemes
On every side I have a stress : and those,
Whom by a sudden blow I would o'erwhelm,
By long elaborate contrivances,
And one by one, I'm forced to immolate.

Pop. Oh what compunction in my heart I feel !
What conflict in myself ! Of all thy cares
I am the guilty reason, I alone.

Ne. The more thou costest me, the more I love
thee.

Pop. 'Tis time at length, oh Nero, it is time,
That, by myself, a lofty remedy
Should be applied, since I alone possess it.
Ne'er hope the audacious people will be tranquil
While I am with thee. Ah, Rome now disdains
That generous progeny of the mighty Cæsars
Which I shall give her soon. 'Twere better far
That on the miscreated lineage

Of an Egyptian slave the imperial sway
Hereafter should devolve. A powerful mind,
Such as perchance I have not, could alone
Tear up this evil by the roots. Although
A pretext I afford, and nothing else,
To popular commotions which arise
Elsewhere, yet have I in my heart decreed . . .
Ah, yes, but too irrevocably fixed! . . .
I ought to do it, and I will . . .

Ne. Ah! cease.—

It was my business to gain time with time,
And somewhat of it I have gain'd already.
What fear'st thou now? Depend upon it, we
Shall be triumphant . . .

Pop. Ah permit that I,
If at thy feet I do not now expire,
Give thee my last farewell . . .

Ne. What sayest thou?
Arise! Shall I leave thee?

Pop. What profits it
To feign with me? Do not I plainly see,
Emperor, that thou, alone to calm my spirits,
Forcest thyself to hide from me thy fears?
Do not I read thy heart's most secret movements
In thy beloved face? A lady's eye,
Sharpen'd by love, sees all things at a glance.—
At the audacious popular commotion
Octavia's coming caused, thou wert at first
Astonish'd; now thou hear'st the hardihood
Increasing, which affrighted . . .

Ne. I affrighted?

Pop. I know thy firm heart still persists in vengeance;

But doubtful are the means : meanwhile dost thou
Remain obnoxious to repeated insults.
Thou wert constrain'd e'en now to hear with patience
The irreverent babblings of a Seneca :
Thou seest clearly . . .

Ne. I affrighted ?

Pop. Yes ;

For me thou art so :—of another fear
Thou'rt not susceptible : thou feel'st alarm'd,
Lest on my head the popular storm should fall.—
Couldst thou now love, and not be apprehensive ?
For me, 'tis easy from my own distress,
To infer thy state. Distracted by thy danger,
Full of thy image, mindless of myself,
The transient flash of a precarious peace
Suffices not to calm me. To our fears
I wish to put an end, and extricate
Thee from all risk, by my own sacrifice.—
For ever I will lose thee, to preserve
Entire for thee the affections of thy people.

Ne. But what ? dost think me . . .

Pop. Nero, say no more :

I will, in spite of thee, promote thy good :
I am resolved to abdicate thy throne ;
To chuse a voluntary banishment
From Rome ; and, if need be, from the vast empire.
Her, whom the multitude would now enthrone,
Let her be empress, since the multitude
Is made the arbiter of thy affections :
Yes, let her have the throne, (this is the least)
But she will have my Nero's bed and love. . .
. . . Unhappy that I am ! . . . Thus wilt thou have
Security and peace.—'Twill be to me

A solace, if a solace I deserve,
 And if I cannot, while I live, possess thee,
 'Twill be to me an ample solace, thus,
 By quitting, to have snatch'd thee from all danger...

Ne. Yield, lady, to the entreaties of thy consort;
 Or the injunctions of thy lord respect.
 From me thou canst not, no, not e'en thyself
 Can, take thyself away; except my life,
 And my vast empire should be first snatch'd from
 me,

No human force can do it. To my vengeance,
 Which ought to be so memorably fierce,
 And to th' ungovernable rage that boils
 Within my breast, (e'en I am forced to own it)
 Compared with their intensity, the means
 By which they operate are slow; and perhaps
 They seem more tardy than they really are:
 But is a vengeance resolute like mine,
 Because suspended, dead?

Pop. To save thyself,
 Or to acquire more time, believe me, Nero,
 My banishment is indispensable.—
 Wouldst thou that I should by constraint depart,
 While now I can with a good grace? The people
 Dare menace even this; and this will be
 The mildest of its threatenings. It pretends
 To chuse another husband for Octavia,
 And that he reign with her. Thus, thou dost see,
 Sovereign arbitrement in her is centred.
 Shall I permit thee for Poppæa's sake
 T'exchange the throne? Ah! Nero, take at once
 My last farewell...

Ne. Cease, cease: this is too much.

Pop. And even should the day arrive, when thou
Shalt, o'er Octavia, and the people, gain
Sovereign ascendancy, thou wilt incur
Thence, in no small degree, eternal hate.
And then, who knows? thou mightest blame for this
Wretched Poppæa. That which now thou feel'st,
Genuine regard for me, who knows, if thou
Repentant, wilt not then, for hate, exchange it?
Oh heaven! At such a thought my blood runs cold.
Ah! let me sooner die afar from thee...
But thus, at least, I carry to the tomb
Thy love, with me, entire...

Ne. Let this suffice;
My rage already is too much inflamed...
Dismiss all projects of abandoning me.
Rome, and the world, and heaven, permit it not,
Mine shalt thou always be: this Nero swears.

SCENE THE FOURTH.

Tigellinus, Nero, Poppæa.

Ti. Long live the emperor.

Ne. Hast thou slain, dispersed them?
Am I the lord of Rome?—But what? thou comest
With an unbloody sword?

Ti. The time for blood
Is not yet come; but it approaches swiftly.
But yet the greatest art is necessary;
Various reports I spread among the people:
Now, that thou perhaps didst meditate once more
To reinstate Octavia; if she could
From some aspersions of malignant tongues
Exonerate her fame: now, that the wild,

And frantic insults to Poppœa shewn,
Had, even in Octavia's bosom, roused
A noble indignation ; and that she
Returns to Rome the harbinger of peace,
Not of disturbance . . .

Pop. Thinks the foolish people
That I, for her, feel pity ? . . .

Ne. Always art,
Always ? Never the sword ?

Ti. The circumstance
The most improbable, sometimes appears
True to the people. At these various tales,
Whether convinced, or wearied, it repress'd,
In a great measure, the extravagance
Of its rebellious joy. Meanwhile the day
Declines ; and night's lugubrious shade will be
A signal to far other arguments.
Already the pretorians noiselessly
Have mustered ; many are proscribed already.
The sun to-morrow will arise in blood ;
And thence in silence. Yet if thou dost wish
Complete extinctions ere to-morrow's close
Of all refractory broils ; if thou dost wish
A desolation long and terrible,
Should, to a false and transient joy, succeed ;
Thou art constrain'd now to full light to bring
The heavy accusations urged already
Against Octavia : by another method
Thou ne'er wilt fully consummate thy purpose.
Thou canst not slay at will . . .

Ne. So much the worse.

Ti. But thou mayst all convince. This, I assure
thee,

Is the last massacre where art is needful.

Ne. Go, Tigellinus, since we are constrain'd to't,
And the projected accusation urge
With cautious vehemence. Poppœa, now,
Let us depart; soon shall we both obtain
A complete triumph o'er this impious woman.
Meanwhile the day will come, when my revenge
Shall be secured without the aid of others.

ACT THE FIFTH.

SCENE THE FIRST.

Octavia.

Oct. Behold, already is the people hush'd :
All tumult ceases; and a silence reigns,
As fall the shades of night, like that of death.
Here I'm commanded to expect my fate :
So Nero will'd.——While I thus weep alone,
What is he doing? In disgraceful revels
Is he already ushering in the night?
Feels he in safety then? So quickly? Fully? . . .
And lives he in security! But, prompt
To fear, and prompt to banish fear, he yields
No credit to a distant danger: Ah!
May such an error not to him prove fatal!—
Now midst the obscene, and inebriate revels
Of an intemperate table, he prepares,
There is no doubt, an agonizing death
For me. Thus did I see my brother slain
Amid nocturnal orgies; character'd,
In bloody symbols, at the nightly banquet,
Was Agrippina's fate: the trembling limbs

Of all his family, are now become
 The holocaust most savoury to his sense ;
 The sacrificial requisite to illustrate,
 And give a poignance to his festal triumphs.
 But the time passes ; and no one approaches . . .
 And I know nothing . . . can e'en Seneca
 With all the rest abandon me ? Perchance
 He breathes no more . . . Oh heaven ! . . . and he
 alone
 Pitied my sufferings . . . Nero perhaps on him
 Has wreak'd his fury . . . But, oh joy ! He comes.

SCENE THE SECOND.

Octavia, Seneca.

Oct. Oh joy ! art thou then living, Seneca ?
 Oh come, my more than father . . . What is this ?
 Thou wear'st a less dejected countenance :
 What tidings dost thou bring me ?

Sen. Unaspersed,
 Enjoy eternally thy innocence.
 Thy unexampled goodness with its warmth
 Has touch'd the obduracy of servile hearts,
 Inflaming them to virtue. 'Mid the pangs
 Of the most cruel martyrdom, thy maidens,
 All, with one voice, the invented crime denied.
 Distinguish'd by her firmness from the rest,
 Marcia, with masculine and free-born aspect,
 (Enough to make us trembling slaves ashamed)
 Fixing on Nero her undaunted looks,
 Now Tigellinus, and now Nero, she,
 With a loud voice, alternately proclaim'd
 Impious impostors : rapt with generous rage

Triumphantly she chaunted solemn hymns,
Commemorative of Octavia's virtue,
'Mid torments seemed incapable of pain,
And thus heroically breathed her last.

Oct. Ah victim, worthy of a better fate ! . . .
But what boots this ? To redeem mine, what blood
Can now suffice ?

Sen. More difficult than ever
Will Nero find it now to spill that blood.
Thou hast gain'd fame and honour, where the tyrant
Hoped to draw on thee infamy and death.
Even Eucerus his approaching fate
With benedictions hail'd. Now horrid oaths,
By which his spirit to the infernal gods
He consecrates ; now free ferocious words,
He utters, which attest thy innocence ;
And now he swears that ropes, and swords, and axes,
To him are far more welcome, than the gold
Which, as the price of calumny, was proffer'd.
To every man around him he revealed
The ineffectual bribes of Tigellinus :
The very executioners themselves,
Smitten with unaccustomed horror, listened,
And e'en in spite of their ferocious office
Kept him at bay, and dallied with his death.
These grateful tidings to impart to thee
Swiftly I came.

Oct. See, who approaches now :
See him, and hope.

Sen. Oh heaven !

SCENE THE THIRD.

Tigellinus, Octavia, Seneca.

Ti. The emperor
Sends me to thee.

Oct. Ah! bringest thou my death?
Now that my innocence is proved, 'twill be
To me acceptable.

Ti. Thy emperor yet
Holds thee not guiltless; and to make thee so,
'Twas not enough to fortify with poison,
Eucerus, and thy accessory handmaids,
And baffle thus the instruments of torture.
Thou hast exempted them from pangs, 'tis true,
But thou hast taken from thyself the means
Of exculpation.

Oct. What new subterfuge? . . .

Ti. Nero now interdicts, that trespasses
Not clearly proved should be alleged against thee.
Another now, another accusation,
Far different to the former one, awaits thee;
And this delinquent, not constrain'd by torture,
But free, unquestion'd, comes to ask for mercy.

Oct. And what delinquent? Tell me.

Ti. Anicetus.

Sen. The executioner of Agrippina!

Oct. What do I hear?

Ti. The same that Nero saved
From imminent danger: to his emperor then
Faithful he stood; thou, lady, afterwards
Mad'st him a traitor. He, repentant, now,
Flies on thy steps; first he himself accuses,

And all discovers : but not less for this
His punishment awaits him.

Oct. What imposture ! . . .

Ti. Perhaps, then, he did not promise that the
troops,
Of which he is the leader in Misenus,
Should, at thy wish, rebel ?—And, on what terms,
Ought I to tell thee ?

Oct. Oh, forlorn of hope !
What do I hear ? Oh execrable race !
Oh times ! . . .

Ti. On thee does Nero now impose,
To clear thyself at once of shameful intrigues,
Of instigating leaders to rebel,
Of disaffected words, of stratagems
So often, yet so fruitlessly, contrived
Against Poppœa ; and of popular tumults ;
Or he insists that thou confess thy guilt :
And for this purpose he allows to thee
This coming day.

Oct. . . . Too much he gives to me.—
Go thou, return to him : beg him that he
Here with Poppœa come. I would alone
To them disburthen my so many crimes :
I ask no more : So much obtain for me ;
Go. Let Poppœa come exultingly
In my disgrace to triumph ; I expect her.

SCENE THE FOURTH.

Octavia, Seneca.

Sen. What wouldst thou do ?

Oct. Expire before their eyes.

Sen. What dost thou say? . . . Alas if thou dost wish it,

He will forbid thy death.

Oct. And would I ask

Such an inestimable gift from Nero?—

From others I demand it; and I hope . . .

Sen. Nero was once well known to me; but yet, I must confess, that now I am o'erwhelm'd With blank astonishment. Each moment he, Passing all thought of other men, becomes More terrible.

Oct. For a most lofty purpose, I in my secret thought have chosen thee, Oh Seneca. Thou mayest prove to me, If love, esteem, or pity in thy breast Thou bear'st for me, to-day. To me wert thou Of incorruptible and spotless virtue The inculcator; thou art call'd upon To be to me this day the minister Of necessary death.

Sen. What do I hear? . . .

Oh heaven! . . . A voluntary death should be The offspring of involuntary impulse.

Oct. Am I so sunken then in thy esteem, That thou accountest me incapable Of an immutable arbitrement? Now, is not death of all the menaced evils, Perhaps the least? What else remains for me? Speak.—Thou art silent?

Sen. Oh disastrous day!

Oct. Speak; speak—What else remains for me to do?

Sen. My heart thou rendest . . . But can I e'er be

Cruel to such a pitch?

Oct. Shall wisdom now
In thee be so fallacious? Canst thou be
So cruel as to see me dragged the victim
Of my ferocious rival, who esteems
My death an insufficient sacrifice
Not join'd with infamy? Hast thou the heart
To see Octavia again exposed
To the indecent and extorted charges
Of every ribald sycophant? To see her
Deliver'd over to the insatiable,
And frantic rage of Nero?

Sen. Why have I
Lived to see this? . . . Oh inauspicious day!

Oct. But what now stops thee? . . . And what fear-
est thou?
Perhaps thou hast yet a hope?

Sen. Who knows?

Oct. Thou, less
Than any other, hopest: thou dost know
Nero too well: thou for thyself hast fix'd
(And certainly wouldst not to me deny it)
To escape from him by voluntary death.
Thou firm in this, herein dost thou deem me
Inferior to thyself; and lovest me?
Nero is dreadful to me while I see
This wretched and tormented frame of mine,
The dwelling of my soul. He may subject it
To all that's exquisite in pain and sorrow.
And should I yield to menaces and torments?
And if from fear there should escape my lips
Of not committed, nor imagined faults,
A forced confession? . . . For a length of time

Accustomed to behold death near at hand,
 Thou art secure : not thus am I ; in age
 Yet immature, and in my heart unbraced ;
 Nursed in the lap of delicate indulgence ;
 Ne'er school'd by nature to the natural virtues ;
 And 'gainst a premature, and cruel death
 Armed feebly, and imperfectly : by thee,
 If so thou wilt, I may escape from life ;
 But have not constancy to wait for death.

Sen. Oh wretched me ! with my declining years
 I hoped to rescue thine. 'Twas my design
 That from my lips the people should have heard
 The hidden, wicked, horrid arts of Nero ; . . .
 But I have lived in vain : all Rome is hushed ;
 And only listens to its wretched fears.
 To me the egress from this fatal place
 Is now forbidden . . . Oh heaven ! who can prevail,
 Himself not impious, 'gainst an impious master !

Oct. Thou weepest ? . . . Me from infamy and
 pangs
 Ah save ! . . . From death, thou seest 'tis in vain
 To expect it. Save me, pity bids thee . . .

Sen. Though
 I e'en were willing . . . Now . . . in such short space ? . .
 I have no sword with me ; and instantly
 Comes Nero . . .

Oct. Poison thou hast always with thee :
 In these opprobrious thresholds, of the just
 The sole resource.

Sen. I, . . . with me ? . . .

Oct. Yes ; thyself
 Toldest me this in former times : ah then
 Like a fond father to a daughter, thou

To me revealed'st the most secret thoughts
Of thy afflicted soul. Remember, ah!
I also wept with thee at thy recital.—
But, wouldest thou deny it? I already
Am risen above myself. Necessity
Makes e'en the weakest valiant. Instantly
Comes Nero; at his side he always wears
A dagger: I will spring towards it, and grasp it,
And with it pierce myself... My hand perchance
May lack address; yet I will make the attempt.
Of having sought to murder him, at once
I shall be charged by Nero: and thou wilt see me
Doom'd to a death of unexampled suffering.

Sen. Ah, spare me, lady: this is worse than death!..
Thou wouldest by me obtain it... thou'rt mistaken...
I have no poison with me...

Oct. Dost not thou
Wear on thy finger still a faithful ring?
Behold it; I will have it...

Sen. Ah! desist...

Oct. In vain... I grasp it. And I know its use:
Its contents yield a swift and painless death.

Sen. I call the heavens to witness... I conjure
thee,...

Restore it to me... If another way...

Oct. No other way remains. Behold it opened...
I have already with my breath absorbed
The dust mortiferous...

Sen. Woe, woe is me!

Oct. May heaven reward thee for the precious gift,
To me so opportune... See, Nero comes...
Ah hasten... death... to set my spirit... free.

SCENE THE FIFTH.

Nero, Poppæa, Tigellinus, Octavia, Seneca.

Ne. Thou fatal cause of all that I endure !
Who from my hands can rescue thee at last ?
Who now shouts for thee ? Where is all the people ?—
Thou hast well chosen : 'tis thy last resource
To manifest thyself, and so to publish
To Rome and all the world thy countless crimes ;
To clear me to my people, and receive
What thou deservest, death with infamy.

Sen. The moment was well chosen ; I repent
No more.

Oct. Already art thou fully cleared,
Oh Nero ; triumph.—That I e'er was thine,
And that I ever loved thee, I have given
Myself already the due punishment.

Ne. The punishment ? What hast thou done ?

Oct. My veins
Already have imbibed a mortal poison.

Ne. And whence ? . . .

Pop. Oh, Nero, now thou'rt mine indeed.

Ne. The poison whence ? . . . 'Tis false.

Ti. Thou oughtest not
To trust her words ; a vigilant guard . . .

Sen. A guard
May be deluded ; thus with thine it fared.
The gods refuse not, to the just, deliverance.

Oct. Poison will soon destroy me ; thou wilt see it :
Behold, who in compassion gave it to me ;
Rather, to say the truth, I snatch'd it from him.
He will exult in it, if thou for this

Should'st punish him; thence I conceal it not.
 See, my salvation in this jewel lay.
 Thou, on the day of our disastrous nuptials,
 Shouldest have given me a gem like this.

Ne. I see it; yes, this is the last, this is
 The plot the most atrocious, to make me
 The abhorrence of all Rome. Ah miscreant, thou
 Contrivedst it, but soon . . .

Pop. Thou hast escaped,
 Octavia, from thy punishment; in vain
 Thou hopest to escape from infamy.

Oct. Shall I reply to thee?—To my last words
 Do thou, oh Nero, listen. I now touch,
 Believe me, on that awful crisis touch,
 When mortal fears and hopes alike subside,
 When simulation can no more avail,
 E'en had I ever practised it . . . I die:
 And Seneca destroys me not: . . . thou only,
 'Thou slayest me, oh Nero: though not giv'n
 By thee, the poison whence I die is thine.—
 I charge thee not with this as with a crime.
 Sooner thou should'st have done this; from the mo-
 ment

In which I first became displeasing to thee,
 'Twere far less cruel then in thee to slay me,
 Than to bestow thyself upon a lady,
 Who, willing it, ne'er could know how to love thee.
 But all I pardon thee; and pardon thou
 (My only crime) if I from thee have wrested,
 By hastening thus my death a few brief hours,
 The pleasure of unlimited revenge.—
 All, Nero, all I willingly had giv'n thee
 Except my honour; and for thee had suffered

All mortal pangs save that of infamy . . .
I hope no injury will result to thee . . .
From . . . my . . . decease. The throne is thine ; enjoy it :

May peace be thine . . . Round thy ensanguined bed . .
I swear to thee . . . to never . . . never . . . come . . .
A mournful spectre . . to disturb . . thy . . dreams . . .
Meanwhile one day thou wilt know her.—

Ne. The more
I know her, more I love her ; and I swear
Always to love her more.

Sen. These words inflict
The last shock on her heart : she dies . . .

Pop. Oh come,
Let us now quit these horrible apartments.

Ne. Yes, let us go : and let the camp and Rome
Know that I slew her not : and also know
The crime and punishment of Seneca.

SCENE THE SIXTH.

Seneca.

Sen. I will forestall thee.—Future times shall
know,
Exempt from fear and flattery, the truth.

TIMOLEON.

A TRAGEDY.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

TIMOLEON.

DEMARISTE.

TIMOPHANES.

Soldiers of Timophanes.

ECHILUS.

SCENE,—The Dwelling of Timophanes in Corinth.

ACT THE FIRST.

SCENE THE FIRST.

Timophanes, Echilus.

Tim. Echilus, no ; if at my side the sword
Distain'd with blood thou seest, to use force
I am not led by haughtiness of heart ;
The general good impels me thus to act ;
The fame of Corinth which in me has placed
Its delegated power.

Ech. Heaven knows I love thee !
Betwixt us even from our earliest years
The strictest ties of amity were formed,
To which more sanctimonious ties of blood
Were added afterwards. A happier day
I never saw than that on which I gave thee,
As consort, my beloved, only sister.
When against Argos and Pleones fighting,
I witnessed by thy side unheard-of proofs

Of martial valour, thou subduedst me
With wonder that enhanced my former fondness.
Thou canst not, and thou oughtest not to live
Obscure in privacy : but I behold
The most illustrious blood of Corinth spilled
By thee ; and thou a tyrant's odious name
Dost thence acquire. Such hitherto I deem
Thou art not ; but intense disquietude
In hearing this consumes me.

Tim. And perchance,
In acting thus, a grief not less intense
Preys on my heart. Yet what else can I do,
If I am forced, in order to secure
The city's quiet, to adopt such measures ?
That full four hundred swords should wait my nod,
Even my fellow citizens themselves
Have deemed advisable. I have mown down,
'Tis true, some lives distinguished, but obnoxious,
Which were already equitably due
To public vengeance ; and there still remain
Ill-disposed persons of that corrupt seed,
Who, having long been used to sell themselves,
Their city, and their suffrages, complain
Of my authority. That power they find
Too great a hindrance to their venal guilt ;
Hence all this envy, tumult, and disturbance.

Ech. Confusion, discord, and the love of party,
The insolence of the nobles, it is true,
Almost have overwhelmed us. And, perchance,
What form of government would suit us best,
'Twould now perplex me to decide : but all
With me protest, that we will ne'er endure
A form that is not absolutely free.

With more complacency I should behold
Thy methods to secure internal peace,
If they were purchased with less blood.

Tim. Sometimes
Blood, for the sake of sparing it, is spilled.
If from the infected frame I do not lop
The injured members, can the rest be cured ?
From the most corrupt magistrates, in part,
The city I've delivered : it behoves us
To trace so many evils to their source,
And fortify with renovated laws,
Applied with judgment, the infirm republic.
If he is called a tyrant who renews
The laws, I am a tyrant ; but to him
Who tramples on them, if this epithet
More properly belong, I am not one.
The wishes of the many are accomplished
By every deed of mine : the few complain ;
Let them complain unheeded !

Ech. If thy brother,
That man of unexampled worth, Timoleon,
Enrol himself among them, canst thou say
That they are few ? More than himself he loves
thee ;

And yet he openly condemns thy conduct.
I fain would think thy objects laudable ;
But too impetuous, e'en in a good cause
'Tis more than possible thou may'st adopt
Measures too violent : for one to grasp,
Whatever be his object, sovereign power,
Timophanes, believe me, is an act
Of perilous presumption ; and to me
Seems most tremendous ; having power to injure,

Alas ! most commonly provokes to injure.

Tim. Thou speakest wisely ; but if ardent passions
Push not men on to lofty enterprize,
Calm wisdom never will accomplish it.
In Lacedæmon thou didst see Lyncurgus,
Who wished to make his absolute controul
Subservient to the universal good :
Was not e'en he constrained to make himself
A tyrant, to demolish tyranny ?
Alas, 'tis force alone then can compel
To virtuous actions a degenerate people.

Ech. Thou hast that force. May heaven direct
thee then
To apply it worthily to worthy ends.

SCENE THE SECOND.

Demariste, Timophanes, Echilus.

Dem. My son, all Corinth with thy name resounds,
But diversely. Yet is it to my heart
A flattering consciousness that I'm thy mother.
Thou wert the champion of thy country ; thence
I, on the other hand, lament to hear
That thou'rt suspected of equivocal,
And private views : it grieves me, that in Corinth,
One citizen, though wrongfully, should hate thee.
For thee am I too anxious.

Tim. Oh, my mother,
Less would'st thou love me, if thy fears were less.
I venture to confront a glorious danger :
But such are the discordant obligations
On us imposed ; a lady, thou should'st fear,
And I should challenge fear.

Dem. It pleases me
This thy audacious military pride :
I deem myself no private citizen ;
But mother of two heroes, one of whom
Were more than requisite to raise me far
Above each Grecian mother. Every wish
Were now accomplished, could 'Timoleon act
With thee in concert, and attemper, thus,
With his strong sense, " the mettle of thy spirits."

Tim. Perhaps in his heart Timoleon hitherto
From me dissents not ; but the transient hate
Which ever misinterprets the designs
Of those who dare to innovate, he shuns ;
And meanwhile leaves me in the perilous lists
To toil alone.

Ech. In this thou art deceived ;
Already have I told thee so : thy schemes
He disapproves ; far less, if he did not,
The number of thy foes.

Dem. Thou speakest well ;
For this I came. Timoleon is in years
Alone not equal to thyself, canst thou
Disdain to have him then in all thy schemes
Thy coadjutor ? His amenity
Is fitted to controul thy eager rashness.
Fatherless children I already see,
Afflicted widows, mothers destitute,
Cast towards me their discontented looks ;
On me, as on the cause of all their woes.
Many by thee have fallen : if rightfully,
Why does thy brother blame thee for it ? Why,
If wrongfully, dost thou thus act ? In Corinth
The greatest virtue, not the greatest power,

Gave us at first precedence. Ah yes,
Upon the terrible footsteps of my sons
Let tears be shed, but be they tears of foes ;
And let the citizens exult with joy
On your beloved steps ; let me receive
Their benedictions that I am your mother.

Tim. Yes, in the camp where valour only gains
Precedency, the first place to ourselves
We ourselves give : within the idle walls
Of a divided city, envy, arm'd
With calumny and fraud, the chiefest place,
To those who have a claim to it, denies.
'Tis indispensable, too certainly !
That we endure, prelusive to long joy,
Transient distress, would we exterminate
This deadly serpent ; and whoe'er does this
Must look for glory after long endurance.
That in proportion as I merit glory,
My brother feels for me less love, I grieve.

Dem. Vile and invidious thoughts in him ? . .

Tim. I think not ;

But yet . . .

Ech. But yet, no lofty enterprize
Thou e'er canst consummate, if strenuously
With heart and hand he aid thee not.

Tim. From this

Who hinders him ? I have entreated him
A thousand times : averse he always seemed.
My coadjutor I disdain him not ;
But I endure him not my interrupter.

Dem. Can I a peril patiently behold,
To which thou'rt liable by him unshared ;
Or see thee gain an undivided triumph ?

Echilus, go to him ; to this abode,
 Which for a long time now no more he deems
 The dwelling of his brother or his mother,
 Bring him to us. Or he shall be convinced
 By us, or we by him ; so that to-day
 One thought alone, one object, and one will
 To Demariste and her sons, be law.

SCENE THE THIRD.

Demariste, Timophanes.

Tim. Perhaps he will come at thy entreaties ;
 long

Has he to my repeated ones been deaf :
 He as a foe avoids me. Thou wilt hear,
 How every scheme of mine malignantly
 With dark hues he disfigures.

Dem. Evermore

Timoleon is the epitome of virtue.
 Thou construest not such praise to thy reproach ?
 Of one son to another may a mother
 Speak it unblamed. I wish to hear from him
 Why he avoids thee. That thou'rt loved by him,
 Thou knowest : with his premature discretion
 He formerly attempered the excesses
 Of thy too fervent early years ; himself
 Caused thee of the Corinthian cavalry
 To be elected captain : well may'st thou
 That fatal day remember, when thy valour
 Had too far onward with thy partizans
 Blindly impell'd thee, and entangled thee
 Among the Argive spears : who rescued thee
 From certain ruin on that fatal day ?

Say did not he at his most imminent risk,
And he alone, perchance, to thy adherents
Preserve their honour, to thyself thy life,
And victory to Corinth?

Tim. Mother, I
Am not ungrateful; all I recollect.
Ah, yes, my life is his; for him I keep it:
As much as glory I my brother love:
Tremendous dangers I alone confront;
He afterwards the precious fruit of this,
If so he will, may taste with me in peace.
But what do I suggest? He has not been,
For a long time, what he was once to me.
He ranks among his most beloved friends
My most inveterate foes. That Archidas,
That overbearing and flagitious judge,
Who at his will now absolutely rules
This residue of magistrates, who dares,
In tones of rage and envy, to proclaim me
Worthy of death; inseparable friend,
Guide, and adviser is he to my brother.—
Why cruelly preserve my life, if he
Afterwards plots to rob me of a treasure
Far, far more precious—fame?

Dem. Do not believe
He acts with inadvertency or malice?
Let us first hear him.

Tim. Mother, we will hear him.
Ah, be not this the day to manifest
That he in brotherly kindness is defective,
Or that I am ungrateful! 'Thou knowest well
That he himself would take from me that power
With which he formerly invested me;

That he professes this?

Dem. 'Twere better far
That he shared it with thee : in both of you
Is equal valour ; suffer that I say it,
In prudence he surpasses thee : united,
What would ye not perform ? What government
Could be so admirably harmonized ?
What mother, than myself, more fortunate,
If with one glory and one power resplendent,
I saw you brothers, heroes, leaders, friends ?

Tim. Oh mother, that thou shalt not gain thy wish,
I swear to thee it shall not rest with me.

ACT THE SECOND.

SCENE THE FIRST.

Timophanes, Echilus.

Ech. Timoleon comes this instant : to thy prayers
And mine reluctantly he lent an ear ;
Nothing constrain'd him but his mother's wishes.

Tim. Among his many virtues I know well
A yielding heart he counts not : but to-day,
If upright meanings, join'd to upright deeds,
Will ever profit me, will be the time,
When his inflexibility will yield
To my persuasions ; or that day will now
Arise no more.

Ech. With him that last I hear
It always seems to me as if the truth
Resided ; yet the truth is one alone.
By friendship and by blood to thee conjoin'd,
By friendship and by reverence to him,

I fain would find a mean by which, to both,
I might display my undissembled love.
Ah! be united; and to your resolves
Myself, my heart, my mind, my sword, my substance,
Do not disdain to accept as ministers.

Tim. I know thee well, Echilus . . . But I see
Timoleon coming: leave us both together;
I would at length converse with him; to me
He may in single conference perchance
More unreservedly disclose his thoughts.

SCENE THE SECOND.

Timoleon, Timophanes.

Tim. Once more, my brother, I behold thee here;
Within these lares, though inflexibly
By thee deserted, always thine. I grieve
That only the entreaties of my mother,
And not thy own spontaneous will, to-day
Restore thee to my sight.

Timol. Timophanes . . .

Tim. What do I hear?—thou call'st me no more
brother?

Perchance thou deem'st it a disgrace?

Timol. One blood,
One mother, and one country, gave us birth,
Timophanes: a brother hitherto
I am to thee; thou callest me a brother.

Tim. Ah! what unmerited and harsh rebuke
To me thou offerest! . . . In which of us
Did anger first arise? What do I say?
Anger 'twixt us? Thou only art with me
Incensed. From me thou fleddest; thou didst first

From our maternal home withdraw thy feet.
Did I not, to retain thee there, employ
Tears and entreaties? But thou gavest ear
More willingly to injurious calumnies
Than to my cries. To thy rage, rage, oh no!
But love, forbearance, reason I opposed
In vain.—Thou seest now in what esteem
I hold thee: in the arms of prosperous fate
Me thou abandonedst; hence I indulged
A hope, nay, certain faith, that I should find thee
In adverse fate a refuge: I meanwhile
Hoped evermore to soften thee, and make thee
Enter as partner in my joyful state . . .

Timol. Joyful! Oh! what say'st thou? How
speedily,

Since I have ceased to see thee, hast thou past,
Beyond all bounds, the licence of misrule!
To shed blood every day, a joyful state!

Tim. But thou thyself, whose days were evermore
Illumed by justice and controul'd by truth,
Didst thou not gain for me the power I hold,
The guerdon of my services, thyself?
What force then is it of an adverse fate
Which always causes, if one man shed blood,
The action to be deem'd tyrannical,
While if a number share in shedding it,
'Tis call'd a deed of justice?

Timol. Hear me.—We
Brought up together, fully know each other.
Ambitious, thus prevented from obeying;
Impetuous, which made evermore to thee
All moderate command impossible:
Such in thy house, in Corinth, in the camp,

Wert thou.

Tim. Dost thou for the gift perchance
Of victory and life upbraid me now,
Which it seemed good to thy discerning valour
To give me in the camp?

Timol. That gift of mine
Arose from duty, not beneficence ;
At that conjuncture fortune smiled on me.
Now make me not repent it. Than thyself
I never saw a more accomplish'd warrior :
Nor a more valiant leader than thou wert
Did Corinth e'er possess. But afterwards,
When from internal broils it was esteem'd
A cure (and of all ills it was the worst)
To keep a standing army, and elect
Over that army a perpetual head,
If thou wert chosen to the perilous honour,
If on thyself the military power,
Join'd to the civil, fell, impute not thou
To me the fault. I do not controvert,
I was reluctant to appear myself
More diffident for a brother, than I saw
That others for a mere compatriot were.
But for thee, from that day, for thee I trembled,
And for my country more ; nor in my heart
Did envy enter ; no, I wept alone
At thy distinction.

Tim. My distinction ! How ?
Was it not also thine ? My counsellor,
My friend, my leader, wert thou not to me,
If so thou wouldest ? and had we put forth,
Thy judgment thou, and I my enterprize,
Whom should we then have fear'd ?

Timol. Whether thou deem
Thyself my brother or my monarch, now
In all respects inaptly thou with me
Adoptest flatteries.—Oh, what sayest thou?
Wert thou not deaf to every word of mine,
From that disastrous day when thou wert raised
To unprecedented, unaccustomed power?—
Was not our former unpretending dwelling
Begirt with guards? Proudly with royal pomp
Didst thou not issue thence? On every face
Mingled alarm and indignation sate.
The thresholds of this house, no longer mine,
By impious sycophants besieged. To truth
Denied all entrance; impious detractors,
Thirsting for gold and blood, audaciously
Flocking in crowds; and mercenary spies
And satellites, and tears, and arms, and quarrels,
Silence and terror . . . Saw I not all this? . . .
And do not I (ah too much!) see it yet?
Could such a fierce and ominous assemblage
Form a fit train for me? Hence I withdrew,
For this was not a citizen's abode;
And in my bosom, far more yet than anger,
I carried with me pity for thyself,
And for thy error and infatuate pride.
I palliated thy repeated faults
For a long time; the people and the nobles,
Heard me asseverate often that thou would'st not
E'er make thyself a tyrant. Wretched me!
For thee degraded, for thy sake become
A liar, I almost, in thy cause, was
A traitor to my country; for thy heart
I fully understood. Ungrateful brother!

To rescue thee from danger, and avert,
Through thy means, such dishonour to myself,
Thus did I act ; and not to clear for thee
A way to guilty power, but to leave thee
One for repentance . . .

Tim. And for this intent
Thou hast selected in my stead new brothers
'Mid my most open, bitterest enemies . . .

Timol. The few remaining lovers of their country
In them I've chosen. I consort with these,
Not from my hate to thee, but love to them ;
And haply to suspend (since thou wilt not
Divert it from thee) that just lofty vengeance
Which every citizen that loves his country
Cannot deny to it. I would not at first
Thy arbitrary impulses restrain.
In this I greatly err'd : to shelter thee
From that disgrace thou had'st incurr'd so justly,
I suffered thee, without reproof, to spill
Innocent blood ; or haply if 'twere guilty,
Blood spill'd by thee beyond all use of law.
Too much I loved thee ; too much was thy brother,
Beyond the duty of a citizen.
I welcomed the illusion, that the hate,
The restless terror, and the dark suspicion,
That always emulously agitate
The irresolute heart of every man that dares
To make himself a tyrant, tearing thine
Little by little, yet for ever tearing,
Would be too fierce a torment ; and at once
A spur to penitence . . . In this I hoped,
I hope it still ; yes, brother, and dare more
Conjure thee to it ; by these tears unfeigned,

These patriotic and fraternal tears,
That thou beholdest coursing down my cheeks,
And by the suppliant accents of a man
That never trembled for himself; repent !
The day at length is come ; thou art arrived
At that imperative and fearful point
Between a tyrant and a citizen,
From which thou must precipitately fly,
Or everlastingly resign thy brother.

Tim. Archidas speaks in thee : his sentiments
I recognize too plainly !

SCENE THE THIRD.

Demariste, Timoleon, Timophanes.

Tim. Mother, come ;
Ah ! may thy intercession be availing
To make my brother's heart somewhat relent.

Timol. Yes, mother, come ; and may thy intercession

Avail to accomplish what my heart desires,
The restoration of a real brother.

Dem. Ye love each other ; why let jealousies
Disturb your friendship ?

Tim. His too austere virtue,
Not suited to the times . . .

Timol. His too exorbitant
And haughty wishes, worthy of the times,
But not of one whom I would call my brother.

Dem. But what, his power, not gain'd by violence,
Can that afflict thee ? He who saved his country,
Wouldst thou have him amidst the lowest people,
Degraded, undistinguish'd, obscure, nothing ?

Timol. What do I hear ! Oh pestilential, fierce,
Insatiable desire of royal power !
How soon dost thou enervate every man
Unfurnished with defence from lofty thought !
How quickly does the insidious appetite
For arbitrary power, in every heart,
Tempted by fair occasions, root itself !—
Is it excluded from thy heart, oh mother ?
Thyself a citizen, gav'st us our lives,
Brothers and citizens : nor deemedst thou
The name of citizen disgraceful then :
In a true country born, thou fed'st us here,
And in her service here thou brought'st us up.
And hear I words within these walls from thee,
Scarcely befitting the distemper'd weakness
Of a despotic oriental queen ?

Tim. Mother, thou seest it ; he twists all to evil.
Hear how his indiscreet, fallacious zeal,
Makes him insensible to nature's cries.

Dem. How many times have I not heard thyself
Revile this city ? Its corrupted customs,
Its venal magistrates . . .

Timol. But tell me, mother,
Did'st thou e'er know me, e'en in words, prefer
To venal magistrates, corrupted customs,
A monarch absolute, and hireling troops ?
Oh mother, for your honour and for mine
I will imagine thee yet innocent ;
And thee, my brother, more impetuous
Than criminal. To what thy perilous schemes
May lead thee, seest thou not ? I then will be
A light, a revelation to thy darkness.
Thou yet hast time. A noble reparation,

Worthy of a great citizen, remains ;
A sacrifice most generous . . .

Tim. And 'tis . . .

Dem. 'Twill be most surely a magnanimous deed,
If in thy generous breast it is conceived.
Reveal it to him.

Timol. Thy authority,
Which by abusing it thou hast made guilty,
Spontaneously renounce it all.

Tim. To thee
I will renounce it, if thou wilt accept it.

Timol. From whom hast ta'en it? From thy brother? Speak,
Or from thy fellow-citizens? Restore
Thy country to its rights ; suspect not me
Of perfidy. If any one but thou
Possess this power, he long ago had lost it.
Reflect, that hitherto with thee I've used
Explicit means.

Tim. Timoleon, I reflect
That an authority the many gave,
The many only can resume. The law,
What I am now did constitute me first ;
Let those who framed it, abrogate that law,
I yield at once.

Timol. And dost thou speak of law,
Where an audacious mercenary band
Confounds the right by might ?

Tim. Would'st thou expose me,
Defenceless, to the brutal turbulence,
The envy, rage, revenge of Archidas,
And others equally with him malignant,
Whose fears alone restrain them ?

Timol. Be thou arm'd
By innocence, and not by bullying braggarts;
Nor make a pretext of the fears of others
To hide thine own. If thou art innocent,
Why fear? If thou art not, not only fear
The rage of Archidas, but that of all;—
—Fear mine.

Dem. What do I hear? Alas! I came
To reconcile you both, and a new source
Of animosity inflames you both
To fiercer rage than ever! Woe is me!...

Tim. Mother, with thee I leave him. He, in-
flamed

With too much anger, now could ill with me
Contend.—Be our opinions what they may,
Accordant or discordant, no dissent
Can e'er obliterate from my constant heart
The recollection that I am thy brother.

SCENE THE FOURTH.

Demariste, Timoleon.

Timol. Behold a miracle! He who till now
Was rage itself, who in his fervid breast
Nursed flames more turbulent than those of Ætna,
Already is an adept in the art
Of simulation; and smooths o'er his rage
Now that he learns to batten it with blood.

Dem. Son, but in this too greatly prejudiced,
Thy mind deceives thee.

Timol. Ah no! rather thou
Art too much prejudiced; nor wilt thou see
Objects most manifest and most pernicious.

Mother, from thee afar I live ; and 'twere,
To make thy judgment sane, needful to thee
To have me always at thy side. I was
Once dear to thee . . .

Dem. And still thou art, believe me . . .

Timol. Thou should'st then love, as much as thou
lovest me,

Intrinsic glory. Emulously we
Should try once more to gain it : from my brother
I would remove an everlasting blot :
I love him, far more than myself I love him ;
As much as I love thee. Thou hast much power
To work upon his passions ; and should'st try
In a resolve to strengthen him, at once
Magnanimous and indispensable . . .

Dem. To become private ? . . .

Timol. To become a man
And citizen ; to disenthral himself
From universal hatred ; to retrace
Th' ancient forsaken path of real virtue ;
To be once more my brother ; for as such
Already, I no more acknowledge him.
Mother, in vain thou flatterest thyself :
Here truth, except I bring it, enters not.
Ye live among intimidated slaves :
And though embosomed in the heart of Corinth,
Breathe not its air : here emulously all
Applaud your cruel hardihood : ye hear
Torments call'd justice ; frantic outrages,
Suitable punishments ; audacious deeds,
Preventive measures.—Leave your guilty dwelling,
And ye shall hear an universal murmur,
Cries, imprecations, menaces, and insults :

Investigate the secret heart of each,
And in the hidden chambers of each breast
Ye shall find hatred, schemes of ruin: all
Have sworn your infamy and massacre;
And in proportion as general fear
Delay the punishment, so much more cruel,
Atrocious, merited, and violent,
Shall it be poured on your devoted heads.

Dem. Ah son! . . . Thou mak'st me tremble . . .

Timol. For yourselves

I always tremble. Do thou then, I pray thee,
Take pity on thyself, on him, and me.
I am so circumstanced, that every ill
That falls on you with added weight is mine:
But, at the same time, every injury
My country bears from you is also mine.
My heart is torn by two discordant feelings;
I am a son, a citizen, and brother:
Beloved names! no one knows how to prize them
More than myself, no one more ardently
Seeks to perform the duties they involve:
Ah! put not to the test which tie o'er me
Is most prevailing. I am born a Grecian;
And thou, a Grecian, understandest me.—
Thou seest me approaching the dire point
Of being your avowed, fierce, mortal foe;
Then yield belief to my remonstrances,
While as a brother, and a son, I speak.

Dem. Oh! what God speaks in thee? . . . I will
endeavour
To make thy brother hear me . . .

Timol. Ah! depart
Without delay; exert o'er him thy influence.

If he no more unsheathe his bloody sword,
'Twill be, I hope, in time : to-day thou canst,
And thou alone canst reconcile thy sons ;
Live with them joyfully beneath the shelter
Of popular applause ;—or disunite,
And lose them, thus, for ever.

ACT THE THIRD.

SCENE THE FIRST.

Demariste, Echilus.

Ech. Oh mother of Timophanes, 'tis time
That thou should'st feel regret for such a son :
At last he has assumed without disguise
The character of tyrant.

Dem. What has happened ?
Where is he ? Can I not retrace his steps ?

Ech. What ? Know'st thou not ? . . .

Dem. I know not ; speak.

Ech. Alas !

By means of his corrupted satellites,
He takes the life . . .

Dem. Of whom ?

Ech. In his own blood
Weltering lies Archidas ; the violence
Is most notorious ; in the public street
Wounded he dies ; nor from the mangled corse
The impious murderers fly ; ferociously
The gasping, half-dead body they surround,
And intercept all aid. Each passenger
Affrighted flies, and scarcely dares to weep
Inaudibly. He dies, that noble, just,

Humane, and only citizen, who brought,
To the degraded magistracy, fame.
Timoleon sees himself in him bereft
Of the unenvying rival of his virtue,
His bosom friend, the only . . .

Dem. Ah ! what tidings
Dost thou relate ? Oh heaven ! now more than ever,
Will peace betwixt my sons be interrupted ;
Perhaps 'tis for ever broken. Wretched me ! . . .
What shall I do ?

Ech. Go where thou hast a right,
And of a mother's power avail thyself.
What reparation of a crime so great
There now remains for him, I scarce can tell,
That may suffice at once to mitigate
The anger of his brother, and of Corinth :
If he will make concessions, and renounce
His guilty power, there may be hope e'en yet.
Timoleon is his brother ; I, by blood,
And friendship, am too much united to him :
We thence shall have unmerited aspersions ;
Yet perhaps still save him . . . but if he have now
Entirely hardened his perverted heart
By his new arbitrary sway of blood,
Tremble for him thyself.

Dem. What do I hear ?

Ech. I, crewhile blinded to his dawning vices,
Have been the dupe of his atrocious arts.
Though late, I see that now the hour is come,
When with him, my affection, conduct, language,
All, all must change.

Dem. Ah ! hear him first, I pray thee . . .

Who knows? perchance . . . I cannot blame thy anger . . .

Nor dare I to defend a deed so guilty ; . . .
 Yet some pretence, at least, of reason, must,
 To this, have driven him. Hitherto his sword
 Fell only on the guiltiest citizens :
 Tremendous, I allow ; but to those only
 Tremendous, who, though impious, and blamed,
 Unpunished stood, refractory to law,
 Above all law, which, towards them, was mute :
 Such hitherto was he.

Ech. If thou dost hear him,
 I fear that he will give thee arguments
 More guilty than his deeds.

Dem. See ; he comes hither.

SCENE THE SECOND.

Timophanes, Demariste, Echilus.

Dem. Oh son ; . . . alas ! . . . what hast thou done,
 oh son ?

A deed, more fitted to confirm the blot
 Of tyranny, with which thou art aspersed,
 Could'st thou have done than this ? All shudder at
 it ;

And, by it, thou hast forfeited for ever
 Thy brother's love. Alas ! who now can tell
 What the result will be ? . . . Thy bosom friend,
 Echilus, even him thou hast alienated :
 Thou hast made thy mother also weep. Alas !
 Too true, too true it is, thou broodest over
 Both illegitimate and perilous schemes,

Confrontest dangers imminent and ghastly.
The bandage, which did blind me in thy favour,
Thou, from my forehead, hast at length removed.

Tim. Whence this extravagant and frantic grief?
Wherefore? What evil can result to thee?
Was Archidas by amity, or blood,
With thee connected? I perceive it clearly,
Thine is a borrowed grief.

Dem. To me what evil?
What evils to thyself may thence . . .

Ech. And ought
Thence to result.

Dem. Call'st thou the public hate,
Which I am forced to share with thee, no evil?
To have thy mother always trembling for thee?
To gain the hatred of my other son?
To see 'twixt you an everlasting discord? . . .

Tim. And must I hear you then, yourselves not
vulgar,
Judge with the vulgar? Do thou with thy words,
I, by my actions, try to change my brother.
Archidas had, so long as he had breathed
The breath of life, in him, against myself,
Hatred, and anger, evermore transfused:
Yes, of my brother's fondness he usurped
The better part from me. This finally,
Among his many other crimes, appeared,
To me, the capital delinquency.

Ech. He was too patriotic, and too upright;
This was his crime.—But hast thou recollected,
That to their country not exhausted quite,
Timoleon and Echilus yet remain? . . .
Infatuate man! . . . Ah! whither dost thou rush?

I loved thee hitherto ; how much thou knowest :
I am yet faithful ; and I thought thee so :
And so thou wert with me at first ; a friend
Thou had'st in me, a friend I had in thee . . .
By blood alone we are united now ;
Ah spare, ah spare, this last remaining tie.
Behold me, I am one that loftily,
And loudly both profess and swear to be
The bitter foe of simulated virtue.—

Tim. Less fickle than yourselves, I do not change
So suddenly as you my love to hate.
Dear above every thing I held you once,
And still I hold you : to regain my friend,
And brother, every means I will adopt.
Thy frank remonstrances offend me not :
But yet I hope, now that I have removed
The chiefest hindrance, to recover thee.
As to thee, mother, I have long ago
Fully convinced thee, that I would impose
A more efficient government on Corinth.
Let me not have to appease you all at once ! . . .

Dem. I am offended for thy brother . . .

Ech. What ? . . .

Art thou impassive as respects thy country ?

Dem. I am a mother . . .

Ech. Of Timophanes.—

Dem. Of both . . .

Ech. No, of Timoleon thou art not.

Dem. Thou hearest him ? . . . Ah wretched me ! . . .

Tim. Permit,

That I alone confront my brother's rage
Before thou hear him. It would be to thee,
To listen to his fierce rebukes, too painful.

I promise thee by arguments to make
Converts of these : no evil can result
From thence to them : and, spite of his aversion,
I will, that with myself Timoleon share
That power, which now securely I possess.
From me, do not thou, by thyself dissent :
A blind love of thy country sways thee not :
Thou lov'st thy children, thou. Leave me awhile ;
Perchance my brother will come here to me ;
I would convince him first : and afterwards
Thou in our mutual joy shall bear a part.

Ech. Is it so possible that he should yield,
As that myself should yield to thee . . . ah say :
Art thou resolved, if he should not relent,
To follow thy infatuated schemes ?
Think of it ; speak . . .

Dem. — Echilus . . . in my heart
What horrible presentiment I feel ! . . .
Ah ! son, I pray thee ; do not move at least
A step from hence, of which I know not first.

Tim. I promise this to thee : now go in peace :
Nothing henceforward will I undertake
Without thy approbation : live secure ;
I swear that I will not. I feel within me
A certainty that I shall be ere long
To thee the herald of domestic peace
As well established, as our public grandeur.

SCENE THE THIRD.

Timophanes, Echilus.

Ech. Timoleon has a heart more masculine :
Thou wilt not conquer him, as thou hast done

Thy mother, by her feminine ambition
Conquered already.

Tim. All the means, in me,
Of conquering all, are placed : believe my words.

Ech. Now thou dost speak at last ; this is a language

Precisely corresponding to thy deeds.
At least I hold thee somewhat less degraded,
Now that thou talkest as a tyrant should,
And I, as should a citizen. I came
Expressly to renounce thy amity.
I grieve not that thou hast deluded me :
Had I deluded thee, my cause for grief
Were more imperious ; spotless is my faith.

Tim. I do not thus with levity renounce
The ancient lofty ties of holy friendship.—
Echilus, hear me.—I would fain convince thee,
In spite of prejudice, that every virtue
In me is not assumed, that rectitude
May be allied to gratified ambition.
If this my thought, to make myself the first,
I kept from thee, if also I denied it,
Had I to thee denied it ; would'st thou thence
Have trusted to my silence, or denial ?
Did a man e'er abandon sovereign power ?
Perhaps thou did'st err in making me thy friend,
While thus I rose to greatness step by step :
But thou would'st err no less, if thou should'st cease
To be so, when my power is now so great.

Ech. Then was the blood of Archidas decreed
To manifest to me thy turpitude,
Which hitherto I knew not ? Can it be,
That thou art thus in bondage to thy crimes ? . . .

But if, oh heaven ! I cease to be thy friend,
I yet remain allied to thee . . . Ah yes ;
By my beloved sister, in thine eyes
Still precious ; by those dear and tender babes,
Of which she's made thee father : I beseech thee,
On her, on them take pity, since for us,
And for thyself thou feel'st it not. Not yet
Is Corinth, as thou thinkest, quite struck dumb :
A joy, alas ! too transient, for thyself,
Dost thou prepare ; for us, eternal tears.
Ah ! hear me . . . See, I weep ; for thee I weep.—
Thou art not yet so far advanced in guilt
That every obstacle thou hast surmounted,
Nor art thou innocent enough to fear none.
Many more lives must yet be sacrificed,
Ere thou canst fix the basis of thy throne ;
And perhaps the hardened guilt thou hast not yet,
Required for such a process . . . Thou beholdest ;
How I address thee as a man ; methinks,
That in thy bosom thou retainest still
Some sparks of human feeling. Many steps,
There are, from loving as I once loved thee,
To abhorring thee : . . . and it will cost me much
To make the change . . . Ah ! force me not to this.

Tim. Thou art the best of men ; ah wert thou not
The most deceived ! But yet for this, oh no !
I love thee not the less.—But I behold
Timoleon coming . . .

SCENE THE FOURTH.

Timoleon, Echilus, Timophanes.

Tim. Ah ! grant thou to me,
That first I speak to thee, one word alone.
Thou shalt speak afterwards . . .

Timol. I deemed thou wert
A tyrant, but at least a lofty one ;
But base as any other tyrant art thou.
Fool that I was ! Is there in all the world
A tyrant of an uncorrupted heart ?—
I myself bring, to the sublime assassin
Of each good citizen, one of the best
That still remains : Archidas lives in me :
Thou hast committed unavailing crimes ;
Collected Corinth breathes in me ; in this
Most free, most noble, energetic soul,
Me, me thou slayest ; thou art silent : now
Nothing remains for thee to say to me ;
It only now remains for thee to kill me.

Tim. Now, hear the new professions of a tyrant.—
This my life is thy gift : thou, brother, thou
Preserved'st it for me ; resume thy gift :
I am not hedged around by armed guards :
Here is my dagger : plunge it in my breast.
Behold I bear my bosom yet defenceless ;
No timid mail is there ; secure I stand,
Secure as thou.—Why dost thou now delay ?
Quickly strike thou. The hate that in thy breast
Thou cherishest 'gainst tyrants, in my blood
Now vent it all : if thy just hate I merit,
I am no more thy brother.—This my power

No man in all the world can now take from me :
Thou, thou alone, and with impunity,
Canst take my life.

Timol. No, if thou slayest me not,
Thou ne'er shalt keep that execrable power.
Already art thou wallowing deep in blood ;
Wilt thou now halt midway ? Proceed, proceed :
Only through this my breast to Corinth's throne
Canst thou ascend : there is no other way.

Tim I sit on it already, and thou art
Unhurt. My city, and my force, I know ;
And I already have advanced too far
Now to recede. There are none equal here
To me, except thyself. ' I would be in me
Consummate infamy to make myself
Again e'en less than my inferiors.
Than thee, I may ; and if thou wilt, I will.
Trust me, that here, the hydra-headed monster
Of popular freedom, ne'er shall rise again.
To thee the government of one seems guilty :
But, if exemplarily just, that one
By practice might refute thy theories.
That one, be thou ; profit by my misdeeds ;
Thus Corinth, more than I have taken from her,
In thee will reacquire ; and I shall feel
A pride in being second to thyself.

Timol. Thy words with keener punctures wound
my heart,
Than could that dagger, with whose reeking point
Thou hast restored my Archidas to freedom.
Yet slay ; slay on : but do not thou presume,
To teach the arts of arbitrary sway,
Or servitude, to one by birth a Grecian.

Successive tyrannies alternately
Have, it is true, disfigured every state
Of this clime sacred to the cause of freedom :
But here has blood been always cleansed by blood ;
Nor has the sword of vengeance ever slumbered.

Tim. And let the traitrous sword come when it
may,

And fall upon my breast : but, while I breathe,
Corinth and Greece shall see, that, evermore
The sway of one is not corrupt : shall see,
That a prince raised by bloodshed to the throne,
Can make his people happy with wise laws ;
Each man secure ; internal peace enjoyed ;
His subjects' fear enhancing their obedience ;
Strong in himself, the envy of his neighbours.

Timol. What would'st thou teach us ? are not
kingly crimes

To all men known ? Does not degraded Asia
Exhibit every day their dire effects ?
'Tis of that soil a plant : there it takes root ;
There less than men it makes men ; banished hence
It makes the Grecians like the gods themselves.
We are the loftiest people of the earth.—
What dost thou covet for thyself ? To be
A king exempted from the lot of kings ?—
Of every good man thou art now the foe,
And wilt be more and more so ; of each virtue
The invidious contemner ; flattered, feared,
Abhorred ; to others an exceeding burthen,
A torment to thyself ; unworthy praise
Evermore craving, in thyself convinced
That thou deservest only execrations.
Fears in thy heart ; restlessness in thine eye ;

Of apprehension, and suspicious thoughts
Eternal prey; an everlasting thirst
For blood and gold, and never satisfied;
Deprived thyself, of what thou takest from others,
Sweet peace of mind; to no one in the world
By blood and friendship joined; of fettered slaves,
The still more fettered lord; the first in rank,
The least in heart of all . . . Ah! tremble; tremble:
Such wilt thou be: if such thou'rt not already.

Ech. Ah! no; the pure divinity of freedom
Never yet breathed into a mortal heart
Words more divine, more warm, more true, more
strong.

Already by the fury, that transports him,
Is my full bosom seized. Canst thou resist,
Infatuated man, a portraiture,
At once so accurate, and horrible,
Of the impious life, in which thou'rt plunged?

Tim. —Ah! perhaps,
Ye speak the truth.—But now there are no words,
Strong howsoe'er they be, that can avail
To wrest me from my purpose. It is past,
For ever past, the time for me to be
A faithful citizen. My master passion,
My sole, immutable, and lofty wish
To reign, is now become my whole of life . . .
Brother, I have already told thee so:
Thou canst alone correct me by the sword;
All other means are vain . . .

Timol. And I to thee
Repeat it: thou shalt never have the sceptre,
Except thou kill me first.

* *Ech.* And me with him.

To that fond friendship which I had for thee,
I feel already in myself succeed
An ardent, strong, atrocious enmity.
Yes, thou shalt find in me an enemy
No less embittered, fierce, implacable,
Than I was once a friend both fond and hearty :
And recollect, that I am not, like him,
To thee a brother.—In the tyrant's presence
I here meanwhile to thee, Timoleon, swear
Eternal fealty of blood. I swear
By thy side, for my country, to confront
The worst extremities : and if at last
Our labours should be vain, I further swear
That I will not survive her one brief moment.

Timol. Behold, thou mad and criminal aspirant,
If so much be resolved by one that is
Thy bosom friend, and also bound to thee
By ties of blood, what will so many others,
Incensed by thee, perform ?

Tim. Enough, enough ;
I fain would have you friends ; but fear you not
As my opponents. Now exert yourselves
For her, ye generous champions of your country.

SCENE THE FIFTH.

Timoleon, Echilus.

Timol. Ah, ill-advised, infatuated brother !
Could I save thee as I feel confident
To save my country !

Ech. In his mercenaries
He does confide ; he knows that other troops
Corinth has not now to oppose to his.

Timol. With this last massacre he has contrived
To intimidate the people ; but their hate
A thousand times he has augmented thence ;
And he has not in every heart extinguish'd
Courage, and resolutions of revenge.

Already by a secret embassy
Sent to Mycencæ, have the people sought
Immediate aid : his very satellites
In part are disaffected. Wretched man !
In his own snares he will be surely caught ! . . .
Ah ! were there yet a remedy ! . . . But he
Has robb'd me of my friend, and, dearer far,
My liberty . . . But yet, . . . he is my brother ;
Yet do I pity him . . . Could any one
Somewhat persuade him . . .

Ech. This his mother might,
Were not her heart corrupted : but too much . . .

Timol. She also for the last time now shall hear
me.

Ere I do this, I fly to supplicate
My friends, that they alone would grant him,
What of this day remains, for penitence ;
Forthwith I shall return ; and every means,
That he may change, will I in turn adopt ;
Entreaties, tears, fear, menaces, his mother.—
Ah, come thou also ; let us means contrive
By which the uplifted sword may be awhile
Suspended o'er his head, and yet no loss
His country thence sustain. Let us to-day
Render to him the latest offices
Of friends and relatives : but citizens,
If this avail not, are we, and shall be
Constrain'd, though weeping, such to prove our-
selves.

ACT THE FOURTH.

SCENE THE FIRST.

Demariste, Timoleon.

Timol. I come to reap the harvest of thy judgment.
Since last I saw thee Archidas alone
Hath fall'n assassinated : thy discourse
Hath hitherto much check'd thy haughty son :
Now certainly thou hast entirely changed
And mollified his heart : that which in vain
My ineffectual and fraternal words,
The universal cries, the general tears,
Friendly reprovings, and the bitter pangs
Of a remorseful conscience, sought to effect,
At last have been achieved by the absolute,
And virtuous intercessions of a mother.

Dem. . . That I applied myself to this effect
With strenuous warmth, I call the heavens to witness ;

But is there any rock that may compare
In hardness with the bosom of my son ?
He hath imbibed the poisonous draught of power ;
Nor are there prayers, or tears, or arguments,
Or force, that now can change him ! I with thee
Was here conversing, scarcely had he left us,
When he inflicted a tremendous death
On Archidas. After such deeds as these,
What avail words ? I spoke in vain ; still more
Timophanes persists . . . Ah thou ! who art
Humane and wise, do thou awhile then yield
To irresistible impetuous power :

Perhaps afterwards . . .

Timol. Lady, to me speak'st thou?

Dem. Alas! . . . If thou dost not, what will befall us? . . .

Ah! hear me. Would'st thou see him massacred?
Or would'st thou, that by force a turbulent,
Frantic ambition now should drag him on
To crimes more heinous still? His state from thine
Is too dissimilar: of too much blood
He is already guilty, that he now
Should live securely were he stripped of power.
Now is it indispensable that he
Supply with power the forfeiture of fame.
But thee, who art arm'd in complete innocence,
Calm reason may convince: and I may find
Thee a more facil listener. His power,
His honour, perhaps e'en life itself, all, all,
If he should yield himself to us, he loses:
Thou, if to me thou yielddest, lovest nothing . . .

Timol. What infamous conclusions! Callest thou
Thy country nothing? nothing my renown?—
Art thou my mother, thou?—If he should cease
To be a tyrant, for his life thou fearest?—
But tell me, thinkest thou that he can live,
Provided he persist to be a tyrant?

Dem. Oh heaven! . . . Every word of thine breathes
vengeance!

Fierce to thy brother art thou, while for thee
He is all love: while he would have in thee,
In thy intelligence and lofty heart,
His country live; and that magnificence
Which he in time of war bestow'd on her,
He wills, that now she should receive from thee,

In time of peace, in more abundant streams.
And this he swore to me . . .

Timol. And dost thou yield
Belief to words (or be they true or false)
Always corrupt? Thou shouldest know, methinks,
That I'm a citizen, and not the city.
The country lives in sanctimonious laws;
In upright magistrates, its ministers,
And not its masters; in the multitude,
And in the great; in uncorrupted votes,
And in the union of these suffrages;
In an incessant and pervading freedom
That makes all equal that are so in goodness;
And, more than all, the country's life consists
In the fix'd hate of individual rule.
This know'st not thou?—It was the highest insult
That could be shewn me by yourselves, to dare,
Or feign to deem me the confederate
Of tyranny in you.—And, lady, thou
Art equally convicted with thy son,
By signs conclusive: it is clear to me,
That less it pleases thee to be the mother
Of me, a citizen, than of him, a tyrant.

Dem. 'Tis clear to all, that, as thou canst, I cannot
Divest myself of love for my own blood;
That I am evermore a mother . . . Thus
Wert thou a brother!

Timol. Oh what mother art thou?
The Spartan ladies, that which mothers should be,
They teach thee in their austere commonwealth.
The effeminate fondness of a partial woman
Is thine, miscall'd by thee, maternal love,
Making thee yield thy son's intrinsic honour

To his unprincipled and headstrong pride.
Behold the Spartan mothers, in their sons
Rejoicing, for their country sacrificed ;
Counting their wounds, and washing, kissing them
With patriotic, not lamenting tears ;
And she that is of most sons destitute,
By stately grief ennobled, move along
Most dignified in aspect : these are women,
Women, and citizens, and mothers, these.
Thou to thy son's inflexible intent,
Although thou know'st it criminal, dost yield :
And dar'st thou say to me, and dar'st thou hope,
That I should also yield to it ? Ah why
To my still more inflexible intent,
Which thou dost know to be the child of virtue,
Dost thou not rather yield ? For him alone.
Dost thou ejaculate a mother's name ;
For me suppressest it ?

Dem. Ah, calm thyself ;
Hear me, Timoleon . . . What have I not done ?
And what have I not said ? . . . I am aware
That on thy side is reason ; but thou knowest
That force, which listens to no arguments,
Combats for him . . .

Timol. No, mother, no ; by words
Thou hast done little, and by deeds still less,
Nay, nothing. Have impassion'd sentiments
Inflamed thy heart ? That patriotic fire
That gives new courage to the weakest breast ?
Which had inspired thee with an eloquence
Imperative, ferocious, masculine.
In thy antipathies and sympathies,
Timophanes, believe me, craftily

His hopes hath founded : he discovers clearly
How much the fascination of a throne
Flatters thy sickly appetite. Say, mother,
Has he e'er heard thee thunder forth in tones
Of lofty menace? Has he ever heard thee . . .

Dem. As far as might a powerless mother venture,
I have presumed ; but . . .

Timol. Was a Grecian mother
Ever incapable, or ever powerless ?
Thou hast, more than thou meritest to have,
Effective arms ; if thou neglectest them,
Thine is the fault. If he to prayers, and tears,
And arguments resisted, thou thyself
Shouldest have banish'd hence (for this abode
Is thine) the scandalous, pestiferous train
Of tyranny ; have taken from thy son
The sources of corruption ; taken from him,
Ere aught thou tookest, weapons worse than swords,
The master key of all base passions, gold.
Did not thy consort's last and sacred will,
Do not the laws of Corinth, render thee
The absolute disposer of our substance ?

Dem. 'Tis true, I might have spoken . . but, if . .

Timol. Thou should'st have acted, not have spoken,
mother :

And if his guilt arose to such a pitch
As to contend with thee, why didst not thou,
With hair dishevell'd, weeping, and in weeds
Of widowhood, tearing thy breast and face,
Depart from this contaminated roof ?
And in thy hand, at thy departure thence,
The children of thy son thou should'st have led,
Themselves not guilty for their guilty sire ;

And with them should'st have dragg'd their weeping
mother,

A grateful spectacle of ancient virtue
To all good citizens: have shelter'd thee
And them with me, thy true, thy only son,
And to himself the tyrant have abandon'd,
Amid his bullies and his parasites:
Not accessory to his usurp'd power
Have loftily proclaim'd thyself; and thus
Have taken from thyself the horrible blot
Of being his accomplice.—This didst thou,
To such exposure could he have resisted? . . .
Surely he scorn'd that which he well might scorn,
Imbecile tears and female lamentations.

Dem. My son, . . . I fear'd . . . Ah! hear me . . .

Timol. He should hear thee . . .

Dem. I fear'd to exasperate his cruelty,
By thus defying him: I turn'd to thee,
And still I turn to thee, to whom an evil,
Still greater than to him, might have ensued;
To thee . . .

Timol. Thou fearest? If fear be thy guide,
If fear in thee must now usurp the place
Of patriotic love, know thou that ruin,
Irreparable ruin, over him,
Not over me, impends; and that this day,
This day alone, if thou would'st have him saved,
Remains to thee . . .

Dem. What do I hear? . . . Alas! . . .

Timol. Yes, but this day, now verging towards
night . . .

I love my brother, but I love him, mother,
With a far different love to thine; in heart

I weep for him, although with thee I weep not.
 I speak to thee with this ferocity
 Because I love you both . . . For Corinth now
 No more I fear ; . . . I fear alone for you.
 Timophanes unwarily confides
 In his bribed mercenaries . . . Ah, my mother,
 My last petitions now I raise to thee.
 I supplicate thee for my brother's life,
 If thou dost hold it dear. I now alone
 Over his head myself suspended hold
 The citizen's retributory sword ;
 I add, I only, to the tyrant's days
 A single day : I that first ought to wreak
 My vengeance in the life-blood of the tyrant,
 I, ah disgraceful weakness ! I preserve it.
 Take warning from my words, and be persuaded
 That Corinth has not yet so much incensed
 Her guardian deities, is not beheld
 By them so inauspiciously, that yet
 They would to one man's arbitrary will
 Annihilate her high prerogatives.—
 Behold the tyrant. I no more accost him ;
 I have said all to him that I can say.—
 If ill result, blame thou thyself alone.

SCENE THE SECOND.

Demariste, Timophanes.

Tim. Timoleon avoids me ?

Dem. Oh my son ! . .

Tim. Has he so much disturbed thee ? Hast thou
 not
 Subdued him yet ?

Dem. Oh heaven! his words were death
To my sad heart . . . Tremble; one day alone,
This only day, remains to thee . . .

Tim. I tremble?

'Tis now too late; now that my enterprize
I have accomplished,

Dem. How art thou mistaken! . .
Perchance, without thy brother, thou hadst not
Been living yet . . .

Tim. Dost thou so much despise me,
That thou expectest to obtain by terror
That which to prayers I will not yield? I speak
More openly than he does: no light proof
Be it to thee of this that nought I fear.—
All their contrivances I know; I know,
That, coward foes, they now betake themselves
To arts in vain. They also have their traitors;
Assistance from Mycæne they expect
In vain; in vain have they corrupted some
Of my arm'd followers: all is known to me;
Their steps, their thoughts, their plans, I know all
fully.

I do not think that I shall yield to them;
But, should that happen, I will ne'er recede;
No, never. Had they openly opposed me,
I should have blamed them less; but they have had
Recourse to fraud. That fraud shall be their ruin.

Dem. Alas! . . art thou so much unnaturalized
That e'en thy brother . .

Tim. He asperses me
With tyranny; but yet, much more than he,
Am I a son and brother. I would give
My life, at any time, to rescue his:

If I select him from my other foes,
Thou thence may'st judge. Echilus and himself,
From the universal slaughter now decreed,
Alone shall be exempt . . .

Dem. Dost thou yet speak,
Oh heaven! of further slaughter? What's thy purpose?

Pause, I command thee. To thy detriment
Too long have I been silent! My connivance,
My silent condescension makes me guilty;
Timoleon's indignation towards his mother,
Alas! it is too just . . .

Tim. My destiny
Is irreversibly decreed: the throne
Or death.—In vain thou art incensed; in vain
Thou supplicatest, weepst, menacest.
I have already issued the command
Of death, and for my brother fear alone;
For military rage is ill controul'd.
Be it thy task, thou mother of us both,
To make him fly from all assemblies: ah!
Exert thyself to the utmost to persuade him
Beneath our roof to shelter. From his mouth
I never learn'd his stratagems: to him
Tell mine, as far as may be requisite
For his protection. I am apprehensive
Lest he should still persist to seek the place
Agreed on with Echilus: here alone
He will be fully safe . . .

Dem. And should I yet
Avail to entice him hither, wretched me!
When of the slaughter he shall hear . . perchance . .
Oh terrible day! . . he then will breathe revenge . .

Tim. When he shall see that I would spare his life,
Perhaps he may change : but also he may slay me :
And let him do it ; he alone may do it :
This life he may resume, since once he saved it :—
But to retake from me this throne which I
Gain'd for myself ? not heaven itself could do it,
Except it first reduce this frame to ashes.

SCENE THE THIRD.

Echilus, Demariste, Timophanes.

Ech. Be not amazed if thou yet seest me ;
Behold the countenance of a generous foe :
And the first dart, that I direct against thee,
Is the unforced confession, that e'en now
A mortal blow is falling on thy head.

Dem. Ah son, I cannot leave thee ! . . At thy side
I must remain . . . thou yieldest . . . Be convinced
By this brave man . . . Oh heaven ! . . what art thou
doing ? . .

Tim. Against each dart my breast is mail'd in steel.
I fearlessly await you.

Ech. Hear me : never
Was I more frank with thee than I am now ;
My heart addresses thee ; nor is that heart,
Because I am thy adversary, changed,
Save for the better : valiant though thou be,
Thou art but one ; unwary is thy trust
If placed on others : thou art beset by death
In thousand shapes : many as are the swords
That thou seest round thee drawn in thy defence,
There is not one of them which suddenly
May not be turn'd against thy breast. Ah ! trust

To me alone; or change, or slay, or tremble.

Tim. Resign me to my destiny. This day,
Which ye announce to me as so tremendous,
Will not be spent ere ye will be convinced
Of your mistake: nor will it then to you
Be unacceptable, to find that pity,
Of which to me ye now are so profuse,
More efficacious as another's boon.

SCENE THE FOURTH.

Echilus, Demariste.

Ech. Thou wilt then have it so? I have discharged,
Far beyond thy deserts, to thee my duty.

Dem. Ah run! Bring here Timoleon: I would
fain

Impart to him great tidings. Each assembly
Persuade him to avoid: he is in danger.
Watch over him . . I tremble . . Bring him here,
At all events, or, ere the night descends,
He will not be secure elsewhere. Ah, go;
Have pity on a mother; save one son;
I fly to make the other more relenting.

SCENE THE FIFTH

Echilus.

Ech. What perturbation! oh! what horrid secret
Beneath her accents lurks? . . . Oh heaven! . . . And
whence

In the fierce tyrant so much confidence?
Perchance he knows our schemes. Perchance our-
selves
Are by his very traitors now betray'd.

All his flagitious plots his mother knows ;
 And more she trembles for her other son ?
 Then has the impious tyrant in his heart
 Determined now to inflict a final slaughter ? . . .
 Ah ! If it should be so ? . . . Let me fly hence ;
 And be the illustrious Timoleon saved,
 In whose salvation is the country saved ;
 Or, for her, one with him, let us all die.

ACT THE FIFTH.

SCENE THE FIRST.

Timoleon, Echilus.

Timol. Now it is night, why drag me here ?

Ech. Ah ! come :

Thy mother thou shalt hear . . .

Timol. What shall I hear,
 That I already know not ?

Ech. She would see thee ;
 To thee great tidings . . .

Timol. And thou dardest perchance
 With her unite now to deceive me ?

Ech. I ?—

What I projected, thou this instant heardest.

But to save thee ! And that is now accomplish'd.

Timol. What sayest thou ? Saved from whom ?
 Explain thyself.

Ech. Pardon, if one thing I concealed from thee.

Timol. Ah ! perhaps thou hast presumed ? . . .

Ech. Be not offended.

Words so ambiguous from thy mother's lips
 I crewhile heard ; such insuppressive fear

For thee I witnessed in her trembling heart ;
Her importunities were so excessive
That I should bring thee here, that, at all risks,
I was resolved to do it. On our colleagues
I feared some lofty danger was impending ;
This I concealed from thee ; I was too sure,
That if I told thee this, on no conditions,
I could detach thee from them.

Timol. What sayest thou ?

Darest thou to make this execrable dwelling
Thy shelter in an universal danger ?
Oh ! thou beginnest ill . . .

Ech. I will atone

By a more worthy end, I swear to thee,
For such beginning : but, I wished thee saved.

Timol. Now, what then knowest thou ? . . .

What is the danger ? . . .

Ech. Little with certainty I know ; but all
I fear : and the audacious countenance
Of the secure Timophanes to this
Compelled me ; and the evasive conscious aspect
Of the irresolute and trembling mother.
Those satellites of his, bribed by our gold,
That undertook to watch his stratagems,
And give us warning of them, are, at once,
Detected, and destroyed. None now remain
In whom we may confide. The place appointed
For our assembling likewise is discovered.

Timol. —Oh fatal day ! . . . Oh apprehended
day ! . . .

At last art thou arrived ?—We are betrayed,
Assuredly betrayed . . . Our fortitude,
Our patriotic constancy, to-day,

Must undergo a stubborn scrutiny.
We never were constrained, as we are now,
To prove the mettle of our ardent spirits ;
And what is worse, we never were constrained,
As we are now, to practise artifice.

Ech. I hastily dispatched to all our colleagues
The tidings, that, except with risk of life,
To-day, we could not meet. I think with pain
That, to a messenger perhaps insecure,
I gave the charge : but brevity of time,
And earnestness to rescue thee the first,
Made me incautious.

Timol. Every man ere me
Thou should'st have rescued. And what better fate
Could crown my wishes ? With my falling country,
I should have fallen : what wish I, but death ?
Why save me ? . . . To what dire vicissitudes
Do I remain ?

Ech. Thou now art placed in safety ;
And we should save our country. Let us now
Hear Demariste.

Timol. —An accomplished tyrant
Already is Timophanes : to thwart
All schemes ; to tyrannize o'er every soul ;
As he is terrified, to terrify ;
All, all, he knows—

Ech. But yet he knows not how
To foresee all things.

Timol. Desolate ! . . .

Ech. He wills it ;
Himself would have it so : of all my pity
He has divested me. Oh heaven ! Who knows ? . . .
Perhaps now our faithful colleagues . . .

Timol. Two of them,
Two of the most courageous, at a distance,
Timœus and Orthagoras, I saw
Coming towards us: but I made to them
A signal to retreat.

Ech. Thou erredst. Why
Did I not see them also!

Timol. We suffice,
If we come here to death.

Ech. We are too many,
If we are forced to an unwilling vengeance;
But, by their means, we might perchance have
warned

Our other colleagues.

Timol. Why hide aught from me?
'Twere best now to depart...

Ech. Some one approaches,
Or so it seems to me: hear'st thou?

Timol. I hear it;
They are a lady's steps: perchance my mother...

Ech. 'Tis she.

SCENE THE SECOND.

Demariste, Timoleon, Echilus.

Dem. Ah son!... oh joy!... Once more I see
thee.

What a distinguished and compassionate kindness,
Echilus, hast thou rendered me! I see
My son once more... and to thee do I owe it.

Timol. Whence such excessive joy? Hast thou
avail'd

To make the tyrant's stubborn heart relent?

Say with the noble universal joy
Of ancient freedom dost thou welcome me?—
Ah no! for yet I see in thy demeanour
The offensive mummery of regal pride.
In what exuldest thou? Ah thoughtless woman!...

Dem. That I behold thee, and once more embrace
thee.

I feared that thou would'st never more direct
Thy feet to my abode...

Timol. It is not thine,
But the abode of sorrow, of imposture;
Or 'tis not her's at least who is my mother.
Perchance thou now hast summoned me to thee
That I may lead thee hence? Oh come; to me
'Twill be a triumph to regain my mother;
'Twill be to me an animating omen
That I shall afterwards regain my country.

Dem. And dost thou still so cruelly persist,
Oh son?...

Timol. Oh mother, dost thou still persist
Thus to contract thy heart? Hast thou aught else
To say to me?

Dem. I would say to thee; but...

Timol. Thou darest not; I see it.—But already
Thou, by thy silence, hast expressed far more
Than I would hear.—And what is this? Thou trem-
blest?...

I understand, thou art a queen: thou art
The mother of a tyrant. Nothing now
Remains for me except to answer thee.
Thou art worthy here to dwell, and here to die.
There was no need to summon me for this:
Thou knowest that I am no more thy son.—

Echilus, come ; from this infected roof
Let us depart.

Dem. Ah no ! . . . Pause yet a little . . .
Thou must not quit us.

Timol. Leave me : I will go,
Nor evermore return to you. Disgrace,
Exile, death, torments, I would rather bear
Than ever see the servitude of Corinth . . .
Echilus, let us go . . .

Ech. 'Tis Corinth's will
That we should now be here ; thou oughtest not
To stir from hence . . .

Dem. Thou canst not do it now.

Timol. Who hinders me from doing this ?

SCENE THE THIRD.

Timophanes, Demariste, Timoleon, Echilus.

Tim. Perhaps I.—
That force, which brother may with brother use,
I now exert towards thee. Let me embrace thee ;
And let me render thanks for thy deliverance
To fate, to heaven, Echilus, and my mother.

Timol. Thou of fresh massacres hast then been
guilty ? . . .

Ah yes ! I see in thy unquiet looks
Recent destruction. Cruel that thou art ! . . .
—Ill hast thou done to save me.

Tim. We are all
Now in a place of safety ; where no one
Can injure you, nor you can injure me.

Timol. Reflect, reflect, cannot we yet to thee
Be ministers of good ?

Tim. Yes; by a quick,
And unreserved submission to my power;
Yes; by yourselves being the first to give
Others the example of obeying me.

Ech. Obeying thee? . . .

Timol. We first? . . .

Tim. Yes: since thou art
Unwilling to divide with me my power.
Perchance if ye had been avowed opponents,
To you I might have yielded. Openly
I dealt with you; this my sincerity
Should have made you sincere . . .

Timol. Thou didst at first
Usurp authority by fraud: this done,
'Twas easy afterwards for thee to be
Audacious in thy insults. Force, with thee
I should at first have used, and never art,
To reconvert thee to a citizen.

Ech. And did not I with a loud voice of sorrow
Proclaim myself to thee an enemy?
And that, although not girt by satellites,
Although alone, and destitute of power,
We should be fatal to thy usurpation?
And that thou oughtest evermore to guard
Against ourselves? Were we, or are we now,
Less generous than thou?

Tim. Thou saidedst it;
And now an ample recompense to you
From hence results. From this last massacre
I would exempt you only, and ye are so.
Thus your ingratitude more signally
It pleased me to confound, and not disturb
The joy of my new government.—Feed not

Your flattered spirits with fallacious hopes.
The gloomy shades of night which hitherto
Were wont to veil your criminal assemblies,
Yes, of those shades, these now have been the last
To your insidious friends. In vain to them
Your warning was dispatched; it never reached
 them;

That very place sacred to traitrous deeds,
Where they clandestinely assembled, is,
To all of them at once, become a tomb.

Timol. What do I hear?

Ech. Oh heaven! . . .

Tim. And these are they,
Your traitrous letters to Mycenæ sent;
Behold already they return: and he,
To whom they were addressed, is also slain.
Would'st thou have more? those two conspirators
Who, clad in arms, wandered around my threshold,
Timœus and Orthagoras, have found,
Also, a death deserved.—Would'st thou have more,
Survey around thee, and thou wilt behold
Obedience, blood, and terror; nought besides.
Why dost thou longer now delay to yield
'Thyself to me? What canst thou do to me,
If thou wilt not yield? I have well convinced you
That ye are now my sole remaining foes;
That I have rendered you to every one,
Not less than to myself, contemptible.

Timol. Thou never should'st have spared *our* lives
 alone.

This I again would thunder in thy ears:
Thou hast done nothing if thou slay'st not us.

Ech. Hope never to recover us as friends.

Nor flattery, nor time, nor force can do it . . .

Timol. Nor can my mother, as I see her now
Stand silently, and full of pride and shame.

Ech. Hold us not in contempt. First against me
Let the executioner direct thine axe.
Thou hast not yet drunken of kindred blood :
Taste it ; the trial will be grateful to thee :—
Nor any other blood remains, for thee
More indispensable to spill, than mine.

Timol. Slay me the first of all. In sparing me
Thou dost but offer me an added insult.
Thou hast snatched from me each most sacred thing :
I am, with everlasting infamy,
By thy means laden : why delay ? destroy me.

Tim. No, on your obstinate hearts I will inflict
Severer punishment : upon the throne
Beholding me ; and thence obeying me.

Timol. —Hast thou resolved then not to take our
lives ?

Tim. I have resolved to hold you in contempt.

Timol. Art thou resolved to reign ?

Tim. I reign already.

Timol. Ah wretched me ! . . . Such is thy will . . .
At least

Let me not see it.¹

Ech. Die then, tyrant, die.

Dem. Oh heaven ! ah son ! . . .

Tim. Ah traitor ! . . . I . . . expire . . .

Timol. Give me that sword : my country now is
safe.

¹ He covers his face with his mantle.

Ech. Ah ! for thy country live.

Dem. Secure him, guards ...

¹ Run ... to the traitor ...

Tim. Mother, no.

Timol. Give me

That sword ; ... In me ...

Ech. No, never ...

Tim. Guards, retire ;

'Tis my command : ... Let no more blood be shed.

Dem. Echilus dies ...

Tim. Let no one be the victim ...

Expressly I forbid it ... Hence : I will it.²

Dem. And thou ; oh cruel, and unnatural brother ...

But thou, oh heaven ! thou weepest ?

Tim. I would have

The throne or death : but yet, at the same time,
I wished to save thee, brother ... By thy hand,
Which rescued once my life, I should have died :
Death so inflicted would have been to me
Less painful ...

Ech. He, not I, was born thy brother :
To him the signal rightfully belonged ;
To me belonged the blow.

Dem. Oh parricides ! ...
Ye ; that he would not slay ...

Tim. Do not, oh mother,
Longer upbraid him thus. In him already

¹ The guards crowd round Echilus.

² The guards retire.

Affliction is excessive ; from his eyes
The tears, in torrents, gush.—I pardon thee,
Oh brother ; do thou pardon me. I die
The admirer of thy excellence . . . If I
Had not attempted . . to enslave . . my country ; . . .
I had attempted to deliver her :
'Tis the most glorious . . . of glorious deeds . . .
Yet I see clearly that a frantic love
Of glory did not prompt thee to this act ;
The purest feelings of a citizen
Impelled thee thus to sacrifice thy brother . . .
To thy protection I commit my mother . . .
And do thou . . . mother . . . recognize in him
A real son ; . . . a being . . . more than mortal.—

Timol. He dies ! Alas ! . . . Thou, mother, didst
by force

Constrain me to come hither . . . Oh, my brother,
Soon will I follow thee.

Ech. Ah ! . . .

Dem. Son ! . . .

Timol. For what

Do I now live ? For weeping, . . . for remorse . . .
The avenging furies in my burning breast
I feel already . . . I shall never more
Enjoy a peaceful thought . . .

Ech. Listen to me :
Thou should'st not now refuse the first assistance
To thy sick country . . .

Timol. I would hide myself
From every human eye ; and shun for ever
The insufferable light of day . . . I ought
To die of sorrow, if not by the sword.—

Dem. Ah wretched me! . . . Oh heaven! . . .
What can I do? . . .

One son is gone for ever : . . and the other
Scarcely remains to me . . .

Timol. Oh mother! . . .

Ech. Come,

Let us withdraw from this heart-rending sight.—
Timoleon, thou should'st now convince the world,
That thou didst slay the tyrant, not thy brother.

M E R O P E.

A TRAGEDY.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

POLYPHONTES.

ÆGISTHUS.

POLYDORE.

MEROPE.

Soldiers.

People.

SCENE,—The Palace in Messene.

ACT THE FIRST.

SCENE THE FIRST.

Merope.

Me. Oh Merope, for what dost thou still live?
Perhaps thou'rt no more a mother.—To what purpose

Have I for fifteen years within these walls
Dragged on a life of sorrow? To what purpose
Been, where I formerly reigned over him,
The subject of the impious Polyphontes?
The subject of the monster who destroyed,
Before my eyes, my consort, and two sons . . .
One still remains to me, the latest pledge
Of inauspicious nuptials; for the throne,
And for just vengeance, by my care preserved;

My only hope ; the sole remaining object
For which I wish to live . . . Oh son, alas !
What now avails it that I saved thee once
With difficulty from the cruel slaughter ? . . .
Incautious youth ! . . . 'Tis now almost a year,
Since thou abandonedst the sure asylum,
In which with faithful Polydore thou livedst . . .
That wretched old man, who has been to him
Almost a father, six revolving moons
Has quitted Elis, and in search of him
Strays through all Greece : and I no longer hear
Tidings of him, nor of my son : oh state
Of horrible suspense ! . . . and I am forced,
To increase its agony, within my heart
To smother my insufferable woe . . .
Nor throughout all Messene have I one
Who in my grief can share ; yet evermore
To my Cresphontes' tomb I ought to stray,
And there indulge my tears . . . Oh pardon me,
That I have not, ere now, beloved consort,
Joined thee in death ! Our mutual son alone
Keeps me alive ; ah, should he be no more . . .
But, who approaches ? . . . Polyphontes ! . . . Ah !
Let me avoid him.

SCENE THE SECOND.

Polyphontes, Merope.

Polyp. Merope, return ;
Why thus avoid me ? . . . I would fain impart
Tidings of lofty import . . .

Me. I would fain
Hear nothing from thy lips . . .

Polyp. Oh cruel lady,
Will neither time then, reason, courteous manners,
Nor prayers, avail somewhat to mitigate
Thy fierce resentment? Thy extravagant,
And bitter grief, which seemed almost exhausted,
Why for a year since has that grief resumed
All its intensity; thus to thyself
Rendering thee such a cruel enemy?
Thou hatest me; and hate so disproportioned,
My destiny, more than my fault, produces.—
I from thy consort wished to take his throne,
But not his life, I swear to thee: but how
Restrain the turbulence of conquering soldiers?
My warriors, intoxicate with blood,
Pursued him e'en within these palace walls;
Nor from their hands could I deliver him.
I was, but equitably was, his foe.
I indeed, from the noble blood descended
Of the Heraclidæ, could not well surrender
To him my throne, merely because the urn
Bestowed it on him.—But the instinctive grief
Of consort, and of mother, listens not
To reason, or to claims however just.—
I only wish to know, from whence thy rage,
Which hath so long existed, hath derived
New aliment? Do I not try all means
To alleviate the hardships of thy fate?
Ah say what reparation could be made
For a mischance in war, that every day
I do not make to thee?

Me. Now, wouldest thou,
That I should render to thee express thanks,
Because by thee I only am bereft

Of consort, sons, and throne? . . .

Polyp. Thy sons? In life
One of them still remains to thee . . .

Me. 'Tis false.—

Ah! were it but as true! . . . I have lost all;
I indeed saw that innocent transfixed . . .

Ah cruel! Thou perhaps exuldest, thus
To hear the dreadful scene by me revealed?
On that dire night, in which thy satellites
Ransacked this palace, where confusion reigned,
And blood, and cries, and flames, and menaces;
Ah! were not *all* our children, with their father,
And our most loyal friends, at once destroyed?
Barbarian! thou, alone to scoff at me,
Assertest, that, my little helpless babe,
Which with so many others was first slain,
And then delivered to the hungry flames,
By me was rescued! Oh ferocious heart!
Dost thou regret that thy inhuman sight
On the sad spectacle ne'er fed itself
Of his poor mangled form? Thou didst behold,
And with thy execrable hand didst touch,
The others with a savage greediness . . .
Ah miscreant! . . .

Polyp. Lady, if I deem him living,
It is because I wish him so.—As yet
The first intoxication scarce was past
Which victory brings with it, ere my heart
Was much disquieted for those slain children;
Who would not only have obtained from me,
Destitute both of consort and of offspring,
In time, the sure protection of a king,
But all a father's fondness. Thou thyself

May'st clearly see it ; what support have I
To solace the infirmities of age ?
Can the possessor in a sceptre triumph
To whom posterity presents a blank,
A cheerless blank ? . . . Since thou assertest, lady,
The death of all thy sons, and I believe it ; . . .
At least I may to thee, if not thy sons,
Consort, and throne restore . . .

Me. What do I hear ?
Of whom thus speakest ?

Polyp. Of myself I speak.

Me. Oh unexpected, new, and horrid insult !
Darest thou to offer to a childless mother,
That bloody right hand which hath made her child-
less ?

Darest thou thy thoughts raise to thy monarch's bed,
Who wert his murderer ? To my widowed breast
Rather present that very sword that slew him ;
I fear it not, produce it . . . But thou deemest,
Ferocious man, thy aggravating presence,
To me, a punishment more exquisite :
Hence, at all hours before mine eyes I see thee ;
Hence, to augment my grief, thou woundest me
With such atrocious words.

Polyp. They are most just,
These passionate transports of a sorrowing mother.
Pour out the bursting torrent of thy grief.—
But why should'st thou endeavour to persuade me
That its intensity will ne'er abate ?
Dost thou to every reasonable thought
Refuse admission ?—Dost thou not live on ?
Already thrice five years thou hast consumed
In weeping, and uncomforted distress ;—

Yet thou supportest it. Each much-loved object,
Thou sayest, is taken from thee ; in the world
There's nothing that thou fearest, hopest, lovest :—
And thou remainest living ?—Then, to give
Some respite to thy sighs, thou feelest yet,
That new delights may one day rise for thee,
Then thou hast not yet banished every hope.

Me. I ? ... Nothing ...

Polyp. Yes, thou, lady : well reflect
Within thyself ; ... thou wilt discover then,
That the recovery of the throne, perchance
Might make thy life less mournful.

Me. I see clearly ;
Thou never wert a father : wholly thou
A tyrant art ; the throne, and that alone,
Engrosses all thy thoughts. My babes, my consort,
Far, far beyond all thrones to me were dear ; ...
And I abhor thee far ...

Polyp. Ah, Merope,
Listen to me.—I ought now to select
A fit companion for my destiny.
All is now quiet ; all Messenia now
Implicitly submits to my controul :
Yet does the recollection of Cresphontes
Live in the heart of many : evermore
The multitude capriciously regrets
The monarch which they have not. And perchance,
During his transient reign, Cresphontes *seemed*
Just, mild, humane ...

Me. *Seem'd* dost thou say ? He was so :
He did not stoop to feign like other monarchs.

Polyp. And would I stoop to practise art with
thee ?

And make parade of that, which, if I said it,
Thou never would'st believe, that I'm consumed
By love for thee ?—Listen to me. I hope
Now to be acceptably heard by thee,
As far as one who has already cost thee
So much distress, may such a hope indulge.—
Danger has ceased, and disaffected thoughts
With it have also ceased : behold my state.
Thine is a dreary life, unpitied tears,
A languishing in pale obscurity :
Thy friends, if thou hast still such, stand aloof,
Or, are from terror mute, if they lurk here.
All here for thee is force ; to this, hast thou
Constrained me more than others : but at once
All from a single word of thine may wear
A different aspect. It would seem to me
A useless, cruel, and if thou wilt yet
Have it, an outrage fatal to myself,
To any other lady should I offer
The sceptre of Messenia, once thine own.
For my delinquency this now remains
The only not inadequate atonement.
A skilful leader in perpetual wars
The camp has seen me hitherto ; through me
Messenia's name alone suffices now
To intimidate her foes : 'twould sooth my heart
Now to the citizens to prove myself
An exemplary king. Do thou then deign
To adapt thyself to the occasion : well may'st thou
Conquered do this, if I disdain it not
A conqueror. A life of wretchedness
Thou in Messene draggest ; fallen so low
Thou canst not lower fall : for thee can I

Do all things ; thou, in recompense for this,
If thou'rt disposed to pardon me the past,
May'st, I confess to thee, now make my yoke
More welcome to Messene.

Me. To the good
Thee welcome ? Who could ever make thee so ?
Welcome to others, thou, who to thyself
Art an abhorrence ? Thou dost know too well
How much thy yoke by all men is detested :
Nor other joy than this now mitigates
My pangs.—Provided I would make myself
For ever infamous, and scorned, and vile,
Not only to Messene, but the world,
And to myself, which is far worse, to thee
Would I resign my hand.—If thou infer,
From my protracted life, an argument
That my affliction is supportable ;
I quickly hope that error to confute,
For but a span of life for me remains.

SCENE THE THIRD.

Polyphontes.

Polyp. —Cautious in vain ; thou art a mother,
yes :

A day will come in which thou wilt thyself
Betray the pent-up secret of thy heart.—
Oh yes ! that son of thine yet breathes. What else
In life supports her ? Yet it serves my purpose,
To feign with her that I believe him dead.
Perhaps I may to perfect confidence
The mother lull, while I observe strict watch...
But what hath watching hitherto availed me ?

It never hath befallen me hitherto
To intercept a single message, never
Yet to discover where is his asylum ;
If it be near or distant : thus bewilder'd
I know not how to act . . . For many years
Merope seem'd to me, if not content,
Wrapt in a slumber of subsided grief,
As one that o'er a secret scheme of vengeance,
That every day becomes more ripe for action,
Broods silently. But for a year or more
Her sorrow has resumed its violence,
And her demeanour has been quite transform'd ;
The tears which had been forced back on her heart,
In spite of all her efforts, from her eyes
In torrents gush . . . Perchance her son is dead ? . .
Yet the Messenians in their hearts retain
A faithful recollection of the father :
Nor can I otherwise divest them of it,
Even in part, except by placing her,
With me, upon the illegitimate throne.
Oh throne ! by those who have usurped thy rights
With what expence of toil art thou retain'd !

ACT THE SECOND.

SCENE THE FIRST.

Polyphontes, Soldiers.

Polyp. Guards, let the criminal alone advance.

SCENE THE SECOND.

Polyphontes, Ægisthus.

Polyp. Stranger, approach . . . Methinks thy mien
is youthful

For one so resolute in deeds of blood.

Ægis. 'Tis but too true, before thee I appear
Defiled with blood, perchance with innocent blood.
Strange destiny! and I am also guiltless.

Polyp. From whence art thou?

Ægis. From Elis.

Polyp. And thy name?

Ægis. Ægisthus.

Polyp. Thy descent?

Ægis. Obscure, not servile.

Polyp. What purpose brought thee here?

Ægis. A youthful passion,

A love of novelty impell'd me to it.

Polyp. Tell me explicitly, and tell the truth,
How wert thou driven to such atrocity.
Though thou hast forfeited all right to hope,
Still I permit thee to indulge some hope
If thou'rt ingenuous.

Ægis. To be otherwise

Would be a violation of my nature :

My free condition is unused to fraud.—

By stealth, and unadvisedly, I left

The peaceful dwelling of my aged father ;

For many months already had I wandered

Through various cities, when, at last, to-day

I journey'd towards Messene. I pursued

A narrow and a solitary path,

Destined for humble travellers on foot,
Which winds along Pamisus' shelving banks ;
Swiftly I trod this path, urged by desire
To gain the city, which, from distance seen,
Gave, by its pompous towers and glittering fanes,
Abundant promise of magnificence.
When lo ! I saw a man advance to meet me
With eager gait, still swifter than my own :
Onward he came like one that fear'd pursuit ;
His mien was youthful ; his demeanour bold,
Imperative, and arrogant : from far
He waved his hand, that I should quit the path.
Most narrow was the place, and scarce allow'd
To one free passage : the precarious track,
By a precipitous declivity,
Descends on one side to the river's brink ;
The other side, by thorny bushes choak'd,
In that direction made the man unwilling
To turn aside for me. I was incensed
At his deportment, free myself by birth,
Accustom'd to obey the laws alone,
And to yield deference only to my elders :
Hence I advanced with an undaunted step.
He, with a terrible accent, cried, " Make way."
I, on the other hand, inflamed with rage,
Return'd his menace, and bade him retire.
Already had we met : he from his side
Unsheathed a dagger, and upon me leap'd.
I had no dagger, but I lack'd not courage.
With a firm foot I waited his attack :
Me he assail'd ; I combated his onset,
Grasp'd him, and in less time than I relate it,
Flung him upon the earth : in vain he strove ;

I with my knees confined him to the ground.
 In both my hands his right hand I imprison'd ;
 In vain he menaced, irresistibly
 And firmly I deprived him of its use.
 When to the contest he perceived himself
 Inadequate, insidiously he feign'd
 Terms of submission. I consented to them ;
 Quitted my grasp, when treacherously a blow,
 Such as thou seest it here, he aim'd at me,
 And pierced my clothes. The weapon grazed my
 flesh :

The wound is slight, but boundless was my rage.
 Blind with revenge, I snatch'd the dagger from him ;..
 And weltering in his blood he lay transfix'd.

Polyp. If this be true, thou hast a lion's heart.

Ægis. Scarce had my hand the fatal blow inflicted,
 Ere I was stricken with o'erwhelming horror.

Unused to blood, I felt myself degraded ;
 I fear'd ; yet fearing knew not how to act.
 First in the stream I hurl'd the dagger : thence
 The thought occur'd in the same stream to fling
 The bleeding victim : thus, it seem'd to me,
 I should defeat all chances of detection.
 I did so.—Guess if I am used to guilt :
 Ah thoughtless ! bloody as I was, I ran,
 Unknowing whither, till I reach'd the bridge.
 There by thy guards, whom I avoided not,
 I was secured ; and hither have they dragg'd me.
 I swear to thee I have confess'd the whole.

Polyp. Thy tale has all the characters of truth.
 I feel constrain'd to pity thee ; but yet
 Justice demands thy punishment. I will
 Ascribe it to misfortune, not to cunning,

That thou the body gav'st, perhaps half-living,
To the vertiginous gulphs of the swift stream.
But thence, as thou thyself must be aware,
Thy fault is aggravated. If this were,
As thou assertest, some base renegade,
Of which too many now swarm up and down,
The turbid progeny of civil strife,
It might avail thee much. Thy victim's name
Alone, would now perhaps suffice to save thee.

Ægis. Wretch that I am ! If I am doom'd to fall
The victim of involuntary error,
What can I say to thee, oh king ? Behold me
Ready to endure whatever punishment
Most terrible thy anger would inflict.
I grieve for this mischance ; but should grieve more
Were I in fault. In my defence alone
My unsupported innocence pleads :
I boast no ancestry ; I have no wealth ;
In all men's eyes I seem a malefactor ;
And ah ! I am so, to have left you thus,
My wretched parents, aged and infirm,
Thus disobey'd and thus abandon'd you,
Inflicted on you mortal agonies ;
And perhaps, ere your time, cut short your lives.—
Ah ! if he yet is living, my good father ;
He who bestow'd no heritage on me
Save uncorrupted manners ; he who was
The lofty image and the bright example
Of human excellence, should he e'er hear
That, in Messene, for the crime of murder,
I was condemn'd to die, what grief were his !
Ah ! such a thought is far more terrible
To me than death.

Polyp. Hear me : thou knowest well,
 Convicted as thou art of spilling blood,
 Thy life immediately should pay the forfeit ;
 But yet thy simple undisguised confession
 Inclines me to relent in thy behalf.
 Till I have gain'd more certain information,
 Both of thyself and him whom thou hast murder'd,
 I shall awhile suspend the final sentence.

SCENE THE THIRD.

Merope, Polyphontes, Ægisthus.

Polyp. Merope ? . . Do not mine own eyes deceive me ?

Com'st thou to me ? and for what purpose, say ?

Me. The tidings which erewhile I heard have brought me.

Is it then true that by the river's brink
 A man was murder'd, and that afterwards
 By the assassin to the river committed ? . .

Polyp. 'Tis but too true : and here the murderer stands.

Me. What do I see ? . . Oh what a strange resemblance !

Polyp. Thou know'st with what anxiety I check
 The least encroachment on internal peace.
 Yet, if thou seest this man, or hear'st him speak,
 Thou almost would'st pronounce him innocent.

Me. 'Tis true : his countenance is not like guilt :
 His mien is noble . . . But alas ! he yet
 With blood is reeking.

Ægis. Who denies it, lady ?
 This blood at first too certainly condemns me ;

But had I been well versed in spilling blood,
I had been also versed in cleansing it :
A little water, and a dauntless face,
Might have eternally consign'd my crime
To impalpable oblivion. But, believe me,
I feel a punishment far more severe
In my remorse, than that which the king now
Prepares for me. Yet unavoidable
Was this my guilt. Alone, unknown, a wanderer,
I was not arm'd for any fatal purpose.
The sword I wrested from his hands myself,
Which 'gainst the fierce youth, in my own defence,
I was constrain'd to use . . . Ah ! trust my words ;
I ne'er was disciplined to bloody deeds.

Me. Was thy antagonist a youth ?

Ægis. He was
Equal to me in age.

Me. What do I hear ?

Polyp. And if he speaks the truth, I should suspect
He was some questionable character.
Along a solitary path he flew,
As if to avoid pursuit . . .

Ægis. Further, I now
Remember that at first in part he hid
His face beneath his robe.

Me. He hid his face ? . . .
He fled ? . . . — But thou, didst thou not know him ?

Ægis. Here
I am a stranger totally ; and he
(I have him still before me) seem'd to me
Also a stranger ; . . . nay, he surely was so ;
At least his dress bespoke it, which appear'd
Rather like that of Elis than Messene.

Me. Oh heaven ! . . . Of Elis ? . . .

Ægis. Yes ; resembling mine ;
For I too am from Elis . . .

Me. Thou ? . . .

Polyp. But why
So anxious, so inquisitive ?

Me. What say'st thou ?
I anxious ? . . .

Polyp. So it seems to me.—In short
A nameless stranger by another slain . . .

Me. Who knows what he might be ? . . 'Tis true ..

There's nothing
Whence I should take an interest . . .

Polyp. For myself,
Were I by duty not constrain'd to it,
I ne'er should listen to a cause like this.
Thou, dead to all affection, dost excite
In me no small surprise. How can this question
Interest thee ?

Me. In me, 'twas mere . . . desire . . .
To hear.—Yet it appears to me far more
The effect of art than accident, that he
Should thus from all the body have concealed :
And thou so lenient to this murderer,
Who thus undaunted in thy presence stands . . .
I know not . . .

Ægis. Fear induced me first to fling
The body in the stream ; it was not art :
I stand undaunted as a man should stand
Whose breast feels self-acquitted. Yet, alas !
I felt more wretchedness than thou suspectest :
And now much more so since I see thee grieve,
Trembling, and apprehensive for the slain.

Me. I trembling, I ? . . I apprehensive ? . . No . . .
But those that are unhappy quickly feel

Compassion for the unhappiness of others.

Ægis. For me then feel compassion. I, alas!
Am far more wretched than the murder'd stranger,
And merit wretchedness far less than he.
Rash youth! 'twas he that, without provocation,
First would have murder'd me. What profits it
That I subdued him, if I am condemn'd
With greater infamy to lose my life?
And if I lose it not, what can give pain,
As shame can give it, to a generous heart?

Me. Thy low condition hides a noble soul.
His words almost compel me . . . yet . . . could I
Gain some intelligence . . . gain but the name
Of him whom thou hast murdered . . .

Polyp. Since, to-day,
Thou feel'st an interest foreign to thy habits
In hearing this recital; since I see,
Oh Merope, that my continuance here
Restrains the free expression of thy thoughts,
I know not why . . .

Me. Restrains? .. What dost thou mean? ..
With thee I *leave* him.

Polyp. No. That from his mouth
Thou may'st learn more, if more there be to learn,
With *thee* I leave him. Thou art well aware
That I am ready, and much wish, to make thee
Of every question sovereign arbitress;
Much more then art thou in a cause so trifling.
To thee do I refer him; of his fate
Do thou dispose at will. Let this now be
The earliest proof that thou despisest not
Each gift of mine.

Me. And how? . . .

Polyp. I pray thee yield.
Ah! might this be a prelude to thy reign.

SCENE THE FOURTH.

Merope, Ægisthus.

Ægis. Canst thou be less compassionate than he?
Does not my youth plead for me in thy favour?
Look on my face, and canst thou not read there
The undissembled feelings of my heart?
Does not the grief of my distracted parents
Excite thy sympathy? Alas! . . Wert not
Thou also once a mother? Ah! for mine . . .

Me. Yes, I have been a mother to my cost! . .
And yet, who knows? . . . —Thy mother, lives she
still? . .

A native then of Elis is thy father?

Ægis. No, of Messene.

Me. Of Messene, say'st thou?
What do I hear!

Ægis. I from my infancy
Have heard him so affirm.

Me. His name perchance
Is Polydore? . .

Ægis. Cephisus is his name.

Me. His age? . .

Ægis. Is great.

Me. Oh heaven! . . —But yet the name . . .
And of what rank, what parents in Messene,
Knowest thou? . . Noble? . .

Ægis. No: he was the master
Of a small farm, which with his own free hands
He loved to cultivate; a peaceful life,

Contented with his lot, he with his spouse
And children led.

Me. And what fatality
Drove him from such an enviable state?
Why did he quit his dwelling?

Ægis. Oft he told me,
That by intestine quarrels of this realm
He had been driven to flight; that the revenge
Of potent enemies pursued his steps.
That all was bloodshed and disturbance here;
Whence trembling for his children . . . Oh how oft,
Dwelling on this, have I beheld the tears
Course down his aged cheeks!

Me. Thou wert then born,
Here, in Messene? And thy father fled
To Elis with thee?

Ægis. No: my father carried
With him my elder brothers, who were all
Snatched from his arms by an untimely death.
I only, born of all his children last,
In Elis first inhaled the vital air;—
Oh wretched father! and I last remain,
If I indeed remain to thee!—A wish,
E'en from my earliest years, possessed my heart
To see Messene; since it was my father's,
It seems to me almost my native place.

Me. Oh heaven! . . . What words are these? . . .

And he like thee

Is youthful . . . of an age resembling thine . . .
And such deportment, . . . such expressive mien . . .
He seems; and yet he is not.—But erewhile
Thou said'st, thy victim also came from Elis.

Ægis. Such my conjecture.

Me. Seemed he in disguise ?

Ægis. He did.

Me. In temper ?

Ægis. Arrogant.

Me. In dress ?

Ægis. Abject.

Me. And fugitive ?

Ægis. Swift, as pursued,
And with suspicion in his looks, he ran
Towards me.

Me. Barbarian, and thou hast slain him ?

Ægis. He would have murdered me.

Me. And said he nought
To thee in death ?

Ægis. Weeping, o'er him I stood
A little while . . . In death's last pangs he lay . . .

Me. Ah wretched youth ! . . .

Ægis. . . . Yes . . . now . . . I recollect ; . . .
That, all his native fierceness laid aside,
Sobbing, in tearful accents, he invoked
His mother's name.

Me. His mother's name ? And thou
Perfidious wretch, and thou indeed hast slain him ?
And cast his body in the pityless stream ?
Alas ! . . . He's lost ! . . .

Ægis. Unhappy that I am !
What have I done ? Does then this crime of mine
In any wise touch thee ?—Thou hast for this
Full sanction from the king, dispose of me ;
And wreak on me a plenary revenge.—
Oh heaven ! how was it possible for me
To offend thee, Merope, whom evermore
My heart revered ?—Thy strange calamities

I from my father learned : and oft, with his,
My tears would mingle at the sad recital :
An ardent longing to enjoy thy presence
My soul conceived. Oft with my aged father
I put up vows for thee to heaven ; with hands
That then were innocent, I often flung
Pure incense in the flame that burned for thee
Before my humble Lares.—And have I
Offended thee ? Ah punish me : at once
I merit it, I ask it, and will have it.—
But how, in any wise, could he I slew,
Who to ferocity of manners join'd
A cruel heart, have reference to thee ? . . .
But perhaps appearances belied his nature :
And dire necessity disfigured thus
A gentle spirit . . . Ah ! what have I said ?
He, if thou pitiest him, is innocent ;
I only am the culprit ; ah ! on me
Wreak, wreak thy vengeance.

Me. But what words are these !
What lofty sorrow ! . . . What can all this mean ?
In spite of my resolve he forces me
To weep with him.—Thou sayest that thy father
Oft spake to thee of me ?

Ægis. How many times
Of thee, of thy slain consort, of thy sons
Did he make mention to me !

Me. Of my sons ? . . .
Oh heaven ! . . .

Ægis. Yes ; of three sons of thine, all slain
By the atrocious and usurping tyrant,
Whose fierce demeanour on this very spot
Smote me erewhile with fear. Severity,

However unrelenting, shewn by thee,
To me were far more grateful than his pity.

Me. His words bereave me of all self-command.
Scarce do I yield my bosom to compassion,
When insupportable and horrid doubts
Impel me to revenge : scarce do I cease
To feel compassion, when, if I behold,
Or hear him, I am reimpelled to tears.

Ægis. What secret conflict hast thou in thy heart ?
Thou mutterest to thyself ? Do I excite
Thy pity ? Why dost thou not listen to it ?

Me. Alas ! what shall I do ? I neither can,
Oh youth, condemn thee, nor can I acquit thee.
Meanwhile remain within the palace : I,
Ere long, once more will see thee. Ponder well ;
And ponder o'er again within thyself
The most minute transactions of thy life :
Remember every gesture, look, and word,
Of thy antagonist. Recall to mind
Also each least expression of thy father.—
—But art thou certain that the good old man
Ne'er changed his name ? Speak.

Ægis. I am certain of it.
E'en when a child I used to lisp Cephisus.
When afterwards he told me that he fled
An exile from Messene, and commanded,
That I from every one should keep this secret,
He also would have told his real name,
If that had been disguised ; full well he knew
That even at the risk of my own life,
I should have held such a disclosure sacred.
I told thee that his birth-place was Messene ;
But what, oh Queen, can I conceal from thee ?

Me. Let this suffice ; desist from further speech.—
I feel constrained to leave thee for a time,
To give relief to my long-pent-up tears.—
This palace I assign to thee meanwhile
As thy sole prison. I again ere long
Shall hear thee ; and thou shalt repeat the whole :
Shalt answer to each question by itself,
At length, distinctly, word by word, shalt answer.
May I find truth in thee . . . But thine is not
The aspect or deportment of imposture.

SCENE THE FIFTH.

Ægisthus.

Ægis. What can this mean ? Whence is it that
my words
Excite such strong emotions in her heart ?—
Now with a look more furious than a tyger's
Towards me she springs ; now she addresses me
With more than e'en a mother's tenderness ;
Beaming with softness, and suffused with pity,
Her anxious eyes she fixed on me, and wept.
Whence can my slain antagonist awake
Such deep affliction in her ? Were she not,
Had she not long since been, a childless mother,
I should suspect that I had slain her son.
But yet, who knows ? . . . Perhaps some adopted
child
Was dear to her : or perhaps she waited
For some one to her projects . . . But in vain
Are my surmises ; I know nothing.—Now,
Ægisthus, thou seest clearly ; now thou seest,
Whether thy good and aged father spake

With truth to thee; "Never debase thyself
To look with envy on the great; they are
More wretched than ourselves." . . . 'Tis too, too
true:

Nor ought I now to quarrel with my fate,
Whate'er that fate may be, when I behold,
A lady so illustrious . . . now deserted . . .
Doomed to a life of such calamity.—
But 'tis already night. Since from these walls
I am prohibited from venturing forth,
To some interior chamber of this palace
Let me advance; and cleanse me of this blood.
Ah! that I thus could wash away my crime!—
But heaven, who knows whate'er I've done, is just:
And, if I merit it, let heaven chastise me.

ACT THE THIRD.

SCENE THE FIRST.

Polydore.

Pol. Here with the dawn I come: and deem my-
self

Most fortunate that no one saw me enter.—
Ah cruel palace, after fifteen years,
At length, once more I see thee. Full of fear
I left thee, on the day, that in my arms
I bore the only son of my good king,
The precious remnant of his sacred blood,
To a secure asylum: but, impressed
With a far different terror I return . . .
Alas! too certainly this is the girdle
Which once Cresphontes wore! This is the clasp;

Here is the impress graven by Alcides :
This precious pledge my careful hands retained
Full fourteen years. Now twenty moons have waned
Since to his side I fastened it myself.
Ah inconsiderate, and impetuous youth !
'Thou would'st not hear me ; to my wary counsels
Thy ears were deaf . . . Behold the consequence ! . .
Oh days of anxious suffering for me ! . . .
Now for a year I've lost thee ; and in vain
I have already for six tedious months
Thy footsteps traced ; and now as I approach
Thy natal country, on the river's brink,
In a retired path, I find thy girdle
Drenched in a sea of blood ? Ah wretched me ! . . .
What can I now attempt ? . . . But first I hope
To meet with Merope. Ah, may kind heaven,
Present me to her, ere I meet the tyrant !
This is my only wish. What have I now
Left for myself to fear ? What life to lose,
If of my young Cresphontes I'm bereft ? . . .
And yet, who knows ? . . . Perhaps I am deceived . .
Perhaps . . . But how can it e'er be ? . . . His mother
May know of it ? . . . And if she know it not ? . .
Ah ! how can I ever impart to her
Such a dire tale ? . . . Yet, how conceal it from her ?
Oh heaven ! . . . But some one comes ; . . . Let me
fly hence . . .
But no ; a lady hitherward advances ; . . .
Alone advances ; . . . and she seems to me . . .
Ah ! yes . . . 'tis Merope . . . Let me accost her.

SCENE THE SECOND.

*Merope, Polydore.**Pol.* Oh queen!*Me.* Who in this place can thus address me? ...
Who art thou, good old man? What do I see? ...
Art thou? ... Do I mistake not? ... Polydore?*Pol.* Yes ...*Me.* Speak: my son ... Bringest thou life, or
death?*Pol.* At length again I see thy face ... At length
I print a kiss upon thy sacred hand.*Me.* Tell me ... My son ...*Pol.* Oh heaven! ... —Can I speak here?*Me.* Thou may'st speak now; we are unseen by
any;

I am accustomed, ere the dawn, to go
Each morning, unattended, to weep there,
Upon the tomb of my adored Cresphontes.

Pol. Oh tomb, of the most excellent of kings!
Ah! that I there might on it breathe my last!*Me.* Be quick, and tell me ... Thou dost make
me tremble ...

Wherefore delay? Wherefore return so sad?

Say, hast thou found him? Hast thou traced his
steps?Speak: 'tis now six months, since thou quitted'st
Elis;

Now is the year fulfilled, whose every day
Has seemed a day of death.

Pol. Unhappy me!

Think what is my distress ... Thou never then

Hast heard of him ?

Me. Ah no ! ... But thou ? ...

Pol. The half

Of Greece I've traversed ; love, hope, strong desire,
Gave a new strength to my exhausted age :

I visited Olympia, Cyllene,

Corinth, and Lacedæmon, Pylus, Argos,

With many other cities ; nor gained once

Intelligence of him : his ardent youth,

And his adventurous spirit, who can tell

How far they may have carried him ?— Ah, son ! ... :

The wish in thee was evermore too strong

To travel, and to learn : oh worthy offspring

Of mighty Hercules, my scanty hut

Contained thee not. Though thou wert utterly

Unconscious of thy birth, each look of thine,

Each thought betrayed thee ...

Me. When I hear thee speak,

What various impulses I prove at once !

Ah ! where, where art thou, son ? ... Thou flatterest
not ?

He grew up worthy of his ancestors ?

Pol. Worthy ? ... Oh heaven ! A temper more
sincere,

More noble, modest, and magnanimous,

I never saw : and so well formed in person ;

In temperament so vigorous ; in mien

So masculine ; and so humane in heart :—

What was there not in thee ? Sole solace thou

Of my old age ; my ancient consort lived

In thee ; in thee alone I also lived :

Far more to us, than son ... Ah ! among us

Had he been seen by thee ! ... As if in heart

He felt his lofty birth, with gentle sway
He ruled us at his will : but evermore
That will was just and generous. Ah, my son ;
The involuntary tears gush from my eyes
Whene'er I think of thee.

Me. With joy and grief
And thou too makest me to weep at once.
Oh heaven ! . . . and when shall I see thee again ?
Oh when ? . . . Ah, son, am I then doomed to know
Thy many precious qualities, while now
I cannot know whither thou wanderest !

Pol. What was my suffering never to be able
To give thee further tidings of his fate
Than that he lived ! But confidence was here
Most perilous : scarcely dared I dispatch
The covenanted token to inform thee
That he had left me, and that afterwards
I sought to trace his footsteps,

Me. Fatal token !
Ah ! hadst thou never reached me ! . . . From that
day
I have had peace no more . . . What do I say ? . . .
Peace ? . . . Ah ! thou knowest not . . . Tremendous
fears,

Doubts, apprehensions, and false dreams, or true,
By thousands and by thousands shake my soul.
No more in quiet sleep I close my eyes :
But if, o'ercome by weariness, perforce
The lapsed powers of nature briefly drowse,
E'en more than joyless vigils, frightful dreams
Exhaust what little of my strength remains.
Now I behold him as a mendicant

Wandering alone, unused to cope with toils,
 The victim of an unpropitious fate ;
 Clad in a squalid garb, the laughing-stock
 Of arrogant prosperity, debased
 By infamous repulses . . . wretched me ! . . .
 Now I behold him on the brink of death,
 'Mid bellowing billows of the vexed sea :
 Now hand and feet with servile fetters laden ;
 And now assaulted, mangled, massacred,
 By fierce assassins . . . My torn heart, oh heavens !
 At every instant throbs ; and when by chance
 I hear of men unknown, who have endured
 The outrages of fortune, I reflect,
 That each of these may be my son, and tremble.
 Suspicion working in my sickened heart
 Swells into credence, and I freeze with terror :
 And from the thralldom of one agony
 I cannot rouse my apprehensive spirit,
 Until a more tremendous one assails me.—
 Could'st thou believe it ? Yesterday a youth
 That in a private quarrel lifeless fell
 Upon the river's bank, and afterwards
 Was, from the fear of him that wrought the deed,
 Into the river cast, my spirits troubled ;
 And still does trouble them. He was a stranger . . .

Pol. Slain ? . . . Yesterday ? . . . A stranger ? . . . By
 the stream ? . . .

Oh heavens !

Me. But what ! thou tremblest ? Speak to me.
 My fears perchance were true ? . . . Alas ! . . . thou
 weepest ? . . .

Thou waxest pale ? . . . And scarcely canst thou
 stand ? . . .

Pol. —Alas ! What should I do ? what say to her ?

Me. Thou mutterest? Speak to me.—What are thy thoughts?

What know'st thou? What dost fear? I would hear all:

Ah! rescue me from doubt;...

Pol. I cannot speak;

Both power and utterance fail me...

Me. I'm o'erwhelmed...

All courage now to question thee is fled...

But yet I will; I will know e'en the worst.

Why should I longer languish on in life,

If I have ceased to be a mother? Speak;

Thou know'st it all; the victim...

Pol. I know nothing...

Me. Speak; I command thee.

Pol. Dost thou know this girdle?...

Me. Oh sight! With fresh blood it is reeking yet?...

Oh heaven! It is the girdle of Cresphontes...

I understand... I... faint...

Pol. At dawn of day,

Erewhile I found it on the river's bank,

Swimming in blood: some one was slain there; ah!

There is no doubt; it was thy son.

Me. What death?...

Oh cruel destiny!... And I yet live?...

But thou, thus didst thou keep a pledge so sacred?

Infatuate that I was! in whom have I

Reposed my hopes, my life? Shouldest thou not

Have stood inseparably at his side?

What weapon should have murdered him, that first

Had not cut short thy long and useless life?

Say hast thou served me thus? And thus loved him?

But, ah! thou weepest? And repliest not?

Yes, 'tis the blow of destiny alone:

Ah! pardon me, I am a mother... No,

A mother now no more!... To die...

Pol. Ah me!

I merit all thy anger... Yet heaven knows

That faultless...

Me. Ah! my heart forewarned me of it...

In that disastrous night when in thy arms

I placed him... Thou wilt never see him more...

With his infantine hands, so eagerly

He clasped my neck; oh heaven, it seemed that then

He knew our separation was eternal.—

Where are ye fled, ye fifteen years dragged on

In tears, in fruitless hope, and racking fear?

So many, and so many woes endured,

The odious sight of Polyphontes borne,

That I at last should lose my all at once?

And in what manner!... And before my eyes!...

By ruffian hands... deprived of sepulture...

Oh son, dear son, at least thy bloodless corse

Should have been given to me! I might at least,

Embalming it with tears, and clasping it,

Have died upon it.

Pol. And I, ... of fifteen years paternal care,

Thus to behold myself despoiled? Alas!

I come to pierce thy heart... And yet, ... could I

Hide it from thee?

Me. To die; nought else remains...

SCENE THE THIRD.

Polyphontes, Merope, Polydore.

Polyp. Brought hither by the unaccustomed sound
Of more than common sorrow, I approach :
What may this mean ?—Say who art thou, old man ?
What tidings hast thou brought ?

Me. Now, quickly come,
Oh tyrant, at the sound of woe, of woe,
Such as thou heardest in this very palace,
The day, that death pursued thy steps. Oh thou,
Who with the woes of others feed'st thy heart,
Exult now : thou at length beholdest me
Utterly desolate.

Polyp. Ah !—Then he lived,
That son, whom thou affirmedst to be slain ?
Me. Oh thou unwary tyrant ! could'st thou deem,
Since I endured to live, my son was dead ?
What life I led thou knowest ; evermore
Constrained to see thee . . . Yes ; he was alive ;
I hid it from thee ; and the only hope
I cherished in my breast, was, that one day
I here should see him the insuppressive dread
Of impious men, the thunderbolt of heaven,
The avenger of his father, and his brethren,
Of me, and his hereditary throne.—
Had this not been, I never had endured
To hear thy words one instant, more offensive
When they presumed to offer terms of peace,
And overtures of execrable love,
Than when they threatened me with bonds and
death.

Polyp. To him who wished thee partner of his throne,

Givest thou such recompense? Oh lady, I,
Who hear myself by thee proclaimed a tyrant,
Am far less fierce than thou. Yes, I knew well,
I knew thy son was living; nor didst thou
Deceive me . . . But, meanwhile thy just distress
I pardon: perhaps soon the day will come—
But art thou certain of this now? Where was
'This son of thine? And whence does he come here,
This messenger? . . . Methinks his face is not
Quite new to me; methinks . . .

Pol. Thou knowest me:

Attentively survey me; oft hast thou
Beheld me in attendance on thy King
Cresphontes. I am Polydore. When others
To an usurper bent their servile brows,
Messene I abandoned. Look at me:
These locks, 'tis true, are whiter than they were,
This form more bent from length of years, this face
By hardships, and by sufferings now impressed
With hues of death: but still I am the same;
Still thy most mortal foe. I saved from thee
My monarch's only son: I nourished him,
I educated him; for him resigned
My natal soil; and honours forfeited,
And wealth, and my loved country lost for him.
All these privations were more dear to me
Than loftiest rank, with homage to a tyrant.—
Alas! why did I not with him expire! . . .
If thou dost thirst for vengeance on the past,
Wreak it on me: leave Merope to weep
In liberty; and from my wretched life,

Which now is almost spent, deliver me.
Nought now afflicts me but that I no more
Can give to-day the vigorous years of youth
To the pure blood of my legitimate kings.
But this the tremulous remnant of my life,
Such as it is I offer it, do thou
Confirm the sacrifice.

Polyp. Thou dost excite
My pity, not my wrath: thou hast well done
In going thus to voluntary exile.
To a rebellious subject I award
No other punishment. Thou art criminal,
Not for the rescued child, which was indeed
A generous enterprize, but inasmuch
As thou preventedst not his luckless end.
When I discomfited thy lord in fight,
It was thy duty, in the camp, that day
To take my life, or then to die for him.—
Yet now I unreservedly forget
Whate'er is past . . . But feigned intelligence
Dost thou not bring insidiously? Now tell,
When, where, and how, he died.

Me. Art thou not then
Content to know him dead? Would'st thou perchance.
Also behold him? Would'st thou reassure
Thy apprehensive and ignoble heart
With the atrocious sight? And view a mother
Shed tears of blood upon her lifeless son?
Go then, and fetch him from the river's bed,
Where not an honoured but a quiet tomb,
He has obtained, and drag him through Messene.
Insults, which thou could'st not when living give
him,

Inflict on him now dead ; go. He, who was
Erewhile assassinated, is my son.

Polyp. And shall I trust this tale ? Wert thou
with him ?

Say. How ? . . .

Pol. Alas, indeed, I came too late !

Ah ! this assassin should have slain me with him.

I never saw him . . .

Polyp. How then dost thou know it ?

Pol. Behold ; this is his girdle, formerly
The cincture of Cresphontes ; with his blood
Still is it reeking : in a sea of blood
I found it by the river ; dost thou know it ?
Feast on it thy fierce eyes.—A youth, unknown,
A stranger, and from Elis . . . Oh ! could it be
That he were not the same !

Me. Soon will my death
Convince thee that 'tis he. But thou, perchance,
That here feign'st ignorance, in that very place
His murder didst contrive . . . Why say perchance ?
There is no doubt of it. A short time since
Thou tranquilly conversedst with the assassin :
Whence sprung that pity which he raised in thee,
If not begotten by thy cruel joy ?
Ah ! yes ; he was thy messenger . . .

Polyp. Canst thou
Be so deluded, Merope ? I swear,
I never saw him. If thy son came here
Conceal'd, alone, a fugitive, disguised,
How could I ever know it ? He who slew him,
How could he recognize him, if to him,
Not less than to myself, he was unknown ?

· Would'st thou have further proofs? Didst thou thyself

Not feel compassion for the murderer?
Did I not leave him with thee? At thy will
Didst thou not question him? The arbitress,
Did I not make thee, of his destiny?

Me. If thou art not then guilty of the crime,
The infamous culprit now is in thy power
Within these palace walls. Vengeance alone
Can now protract my life a few brief moments.
Grant now that I may quickly see him fall
Upon the tomb of the unappeased Cresphontes;
There, midst a thousand and a thousand torments,
Let me behold him, his perfidious soul
Breathe forth in death: and then..

Polyp. With equity
I might award a recompence to one
That slew a vile assassin who approach'd
With circumventive arts to murder me.
But yet I will myself avenge the death
Of my inveterate foe; (thus learn that thou
Aspersest me unjustly :) for that death
I promise thee a plenary atonement...

Me. Rigorous and unexampled, swift and dreadful,
I will that it should be: never till now
I ask'd of thee a boon: be this from thee,
As 'tis the first to me, the latest favour...
But speak'st thou truly? .. I can scarcely trust thee..
With all the blood of that ferocious man
To satiate my eyes... What do I say?
My eyes? I will myself inflict the blow;
I will within that heart a thousand times

Immerge the dagger . . . Ah atrocious heart !
That heard my son, with his expiring voice,
In lamentable tones invoke his mother . . .
He heard him, yet he toss'd him in the stream,
Perhaps yet half living ; perhaps in such a state
That even then he might have been deliver'd
From death's tremendous jaws . . . And he erewhile
Recounted this to me ; I listen'd to him,
And almost thought him innocent ; thus more
The murderer than the murder'd woke my pity.
Pity ! Yes, now I will atone for it :
Such an example will I make of him
As never yet was heard of ; I myself,—
But thou, tell me, did'st thou not promise it ?
And wilt thou keep thy word ?

Polyp. Thou shalt thyself
Here speedily wreak on him what revenge
Pleases thee best. Ah ! might his blood abate
Within thy heart the hate it bears towards me !
Ah may thy indignation utterly
Exhaust itself in him ! I fly from hence
To execute thy wish : no longer now
Will I intrude upon thy just distress ;
But quickly I return, at least in part,
To solace it.—Meanwhile do thou not quit her.
Pity in thee I do not reprehend :
But for the mother feel it, if thou hast
Felt it so much already for the son.

SCENE THE FOURTH.

Polydore, Merope.

Pol. Retire awhile to thy apartments, lady.

Permit me, Merope, to avail myself
 Of the importunate and tardy pity
 Of the fierce tyrant ; at thy feet permit me,
 Weeping with thee, and speaking of thy son,
 To breathe my last . . . May I see him avenged,
 And afterwards expire !—Come, lady, come ;
 With grief and indignation thou’rt exhausted,
 And thy knees fail beneath thy weight. If thou
 Refusest all repose to thy worn frame,
 Thou wilt not live to witness that revenge
 Thy soul so much desires.

Me. Ah ! may I see it !

ACT THE FOURTH.

SCENE THE FIRST.

Ægisthus.

Ægis. The king commands that I await him here ?
 My fate is then irrevocably seal’d :
 Whate’er it be, I fearlessly expect it.
 My only consolation is to know
 That I am innocent. Yet evermore
 (If haply longer life be spared to me)
 ’Twill be to me in all vicissitudes
 Haunted by bitter thoughts ; eternally
 That murdered man will flit before mine eyes.—
 If in my heart I cherish flattering hopes
 Of pardon, heaven knows why I cherish them.
 Beloved father ! for thyself alone,
 And once more to behold thee, I desire
 Protracted life ; to restore peace to thee,
 Of which I robb’d thee ; with my pious hands

To close thine aged eyes swimming in death :
 For too assuredly thy failing life
 Is drawing near a close ! . . . Ungrateful son !
 Perchance thyself hast forwarded his death ! . .

SCENE THE SECOND.

Polydore, Ægisthus.

Pol. It seems that Merope is somewhat calm'd,
 Waiting the tyrant's coming : to that tomb
 Meanwhile I will repair . . .

Ægis. What voice is that ?

Pol. There offer up my vows . . .

Ægis. Heavens ! Is it true ?

Do I behold that venerable man ? . .

Pol. There shed some pious tears . . .

Ægis. I'm not deceived ;

His snowy locks, his gait, the self-same garb . . .

Turn this way, good old man . . .

Pol. Who calls me thus ?

Ægis. Ah father . . .

Pol. Whom do I see ? Oh heaven ! Thou here ?
 Thou living ? Where then am I doom'd to find thee !
 Ah ! hide thyself. I tremble . . . Wretched youth ! . .
 Thou art undone.

Ægis. Ah ! suffer first that I

A thousand times enfold thee to my bosom.
 Doubtless for me, oh father, thou hast placed
 Thy feet within Messene, where thou hast
 So many foes ; dar'st thou for me incur
 So great a risk ? . . Oh heaven ! an impious son
 Am I ; I merit not such proofs of love :
 Too much I err'd in leaving thee.

Pol. Alas !
... Choak'd by my tears ... I cannot ... speak ... to
thee ...
Ah, hide thyself ... Fly hence ... Thou art ... Thy
risk

Is imminent ... How cam'st thou in Messene ? ..
How in this palace ? ..

Ægis. In a luckless hour
Thou findest me, oh father : in these walls
I am a prisoner ... How my heart is rent
In being forced now to confess to thee,
That on the very verge perchance I stand
Of being sentenced as a homicide
To ignominious punishment. Perchance,
I yet may be absolved, for innocent
I am, although indeed a homicide ...
Ah ! what a son hast thou regain'd in me !

Pol. Oh unexpected destiny ! Didst thou
Then kill the stranger on the river's brink ? ..

Ægis. I kill'd him, yes ; but in my own defence.

Pol. Oh fatal blow ! .. Oh my paternal cares ! ..
Ah, tell me ; .. See if any one can hear us.

Ægis. As far as I can see, no one is near :
That passage, which leads hither from the palace,
With guards is crowded ; but they are remote ;
They cannot hear us. But what would'st thou say,
Oh father, that I do not know already ?
Behold me, prostrate at thy feet I fall :
Ah ! long ere this, repentant in my heart,
I've wept, and weep again, that I have giv'n thee
Such mortal anguish. I know all already.
What do I not deserve ? How could I quit
A father so indulgent and so tender ? ..

Ah! if I e'er return to see again
 Our dear domestic hearth, never, oh never,
 Will I, I swear to thee, one step depart
 From thy protecting presence... My loved mother,
 With her how fares it, say?... Weeps she for me?...
 I seem to hear and see her;... and I weep...

Pol. Oh son!... compel me not to shed these
 tears!...

This is no time for it... I would...

Ægis. Reflect:

If any one here saw thee? Thou must be
 To many here well known... If recognized...
 For thee alone I tremble... To what risk
 Have I exposed thee!... Ah! retire with me
 Where I in weeping pass'd this tedious night;
 There let me hide thee till the close of day.
 Ah! if the tyrant should discover thee!...
 And at the same time if he should find out
 That I am thy son!... Come: yet I feel some hope:
 For Polyphontes is not now possess'd
 With rage intractable; and in my cause
 I found e'en Merope inclined to mercy:
 Hence I am justified in hoping yet
 Pardon for my involuntary crime.

Pol. Oh Heaven!... Did Merope herself... To
 thee... —

—It now behoves me that I speak to him
 Briefly, but fully... Ah!... What can I do?...
 What say to him?... And what conceal from him?...
 Withdraw thyself at least for a short time.

Ægis. Fruitless were the attempt; I should be
 sought for;

I was commanded to wait here. But why

Conceal myself? . .

Pol. Thou never didst incur
Danger more imminent ; nor I e'er felt
Such mortal anguish. Merope herself
Has sworn thy death : and Polyphontes here
Amid his minions comes with Merope.
Herself would be thy executioner ;
For the assassin of her only son
Merope deems thee.

Ægis. What have I then done ?
A son remain'd to her, a son, and I
Have robb'd her of him ?—Ah ! come here, come
here,

Disconsolate mother ; thy just wrath appease
In this perfidious heart. What punishment,
What death, what infamy, deserve I not ?

Pol. But, . . thou . . art not . . the murderer . . of
her son.

Ægis. Then ?

Pol. Thou art not.

Ægis. But what does this avail ?
She thinks me so : she is a childless mother,
Of her last hope bereft : 'twill be a solace
To her distress to sacrifice my life ;
Then let her come . .

Pol. Ah no ! . . She of her son
Is not bereft.

Ægis. But he, that I destroy'd . . —
At all risks I will see her ; hear her . .

Pol. Fly . .

Ægis. I will not, nor can I . .

Pol. Or at least . .

Ægis. But if I am not then . .

Pol. Thou art . . that son
Whom she laments as dead.

Ægis. I! What say'st thou? . .
I am? . . Thou not my father? . . Am I then
Sprung from Alcides' blood?

Pol. Oh Heaven! . . be silent;
Though not my son, to me thou'rt more than son.
I rescued thee from hence; I brought thee up
Under the feign'd name of Ægisthus; I
Preserved thee, wretched that I am, perchance
For a more cruel fate.

Ægis. Oh mystery,
Evermore, hitherto, to me profound
And unintelligible! For Merope,
Whene'er I saw her, in myself I felt
I know not what of indefinable,
Confused, and unimaginable love;
And at the same time felt towards Polyphontes
More indignation and antipathy
Than ever yet mere tyranny excited.
Yes, now I recollect, now I behold,
Now comprehend it all. Thy name is not
Cephisus.

Pol. It is Polydore. At once
My name and rank I hid from thee. I fear'd
The indiscretion of thy youth: but how
Could any one foresee? . . Meanwhile, oh heaven!
The hour passes, and ere long . . Ah! if I could
Give Merope a timely warning . .

Ægis. Heaven,
Which o'er my life hath hitherto alone
Seem'd to preside; that Heaven which rescued me,

An infant, from the vigilant revenge
 Of a blood-thirsty tyrant ; Heaven which lent
 The heart of youth to thy old age, the strength,
 The enterprize, the courage ; shall it be
 That Heaven now leaves me by the very hands
 Of my own mother to be sacrificed ?—
 Shall I, who am the offspring of Alcides,
 If there be one who with a sword will arm
 This strong right hand, shall I permit myself
 To be demolished by an abject tyrant ?

Pol. Young man, thou seest nothing but thy valour ; .

But I behold thy danger. To deceive
 Merope more completely, and abate
 The general hatred, crafty Polyphontes
 Now feigns a pity for that very son,
 Whom, having in his power, he would slay.
 But if the impious usurper sees him
 Restored to life, he will at once resume
 His bloody and ferocious character ;
 And thou wilt fall his victim. Ah ! beware ;
 I fly to intercept thy mother's steps :
 Perhaps yet I may be able . . Ah ! if I
 Arrived in time ! . .

Ægis. Methinks that I behold
 Soldiers advancing hitherward . .

Pol. Alas !

With Polyphontes Merope approaches . .

Ægis. And after them a train of armed men ! .

Pol. What shall I do ? . . Stand at my side, oh son ! . .

I swear at least to die in thy defence.

SCENE THE THIRD.

*Polyphontes, Merope, Ægisthus, Polydore, People,
Soldiers.*

Polyp. Behold, oh Merope, I now commit
Into thy hands the murderer of thy son.
Let him be manacled with heavy chains;
And instantaneously at thy nod expire.

Me. Ah miscreant! barbarous and atrocious wretch!
Assassin vile! thou hast imbrued thy hands
In the pure blood of my beloved son!
What now avails it that I spill all thine?
Can all thy blood redeem a drop of his?
I, who already was so much afflicted!
And thou, beyond all women and all mothers,
Hast rendered me incomparably wretched!—
Rivet those iron chains; prepare for him
Horrid and unexampled agonies;
And let his labouring soul toil forth in death
'Mid exquisite and long-protracted torments.
I will behold his bloody tears gush forth:
I will myself inflict on him not one,
But thousand, thousand deaths.—Ah Merope,
Alas! . . Will this restore to thee thy son?

Ægis. Oh Merope, I yield myself to thee:
Yes, to a mother willingly I yield,
So justly desperate: and if in chains
These had not bound me, thou hadst well sufficed
To wreak on me what torments please thee best.
Just is thy indignation . . Yet thou knowest
That guiltless, and e'en worthy of compassion,
Erewhile I seem'd to thee.

Me. I? . . felt for thee? . .
Compassion? . . — Yet those accents on my heart,
Whence is their unknown power? . . — Why thus
delay? . .

What pity do I feel! . . What words were those? . .
Let us depart, and drag him to that tomb;
The father's shade, and those of his slain sons,
May by his blood be pacified; . . and mine;
For I shall quickly follow them.

Polyp. One instant
Be pleased yet to suspend. — Soldiers, and you,
Messenians, witnesses I wish you all
Of this just solemn act. — Clandestinely
This angry mother to my detriment
Conceal'd a son: yet not the less I feel
Compassion for her grief; and I attest
The righteous gods, that had she, when alive,
With generous confidence reveal'd him to me,
I had, e'en as he were a son of mine,
Watched his well being, and his tender years
Defended with a fond solicitude.
Dead, 'tis my duty to avenge that son.
Ye hear? — Promptly be Merope obeyed:
To such immeasurable wretchedness
A single victim is inadequate.

Ægis. Ah! a far different victim is required
To appease Cresphontes' shade.

Me. What mutterest thou?
Let us depart . .

Pol. I pray thee, pause a little . .
I would impart to thee . . Ah! hear me . .

Me. Why
Speakest thou thus in whispers? Thou wert once

Devoted to Cresphontes; of his son
 Thou wert the guardian: dost thou now repent
 Of thy fidelity? And what, dost thou
 Grieve for the murderer? . . . Feel'st thou pity for
 him? . . .

And pray'st thou that the blow . .

Pol. I . . pity? . . no . .

But thou'rt a mother . . Pause . . Now more at length
 Thou should'st from him himself hear many things
 Of thy lost son.

Polyp. This youth then knew that son?

Me. What can I hear?—What dar'st thou to propose?

Hop'st thou to mitigate my rage? Did he
 Not slay my son? Didst thou not tell me so?
 Did not himself confess it? This his belt,
 Reeking with blood, placed in my hands by thee,
 Does that not give assurance of the fact?

Ægis. That belt is mine, I swear to thee. Un-
 clasp'd

I lost it from my side.

Pol. Perhaps there might be
 Another like to this . . . that murder'd youth . . .
 Perhaps he was not thy son . .

Me. What new fraud

Am I compell'd to hear? . . Ah guilty tyrant!
 Then hast thou all corrupted? Even him,
 So faithful to us once? As in defiance
 Would'st thou the assassin of my son preserve,
 And feign'st to wish him slain? and means like
 these? . .

Polyp. Oh lady, thou'rt distracted by thy grief.
 Who cannot here perceive . .

Me. If then, in truth,
Thou dost desire his death, there now remains
No more for me to hear. E'en now I hold
My rage restrain'd no longer; all delay
Will turn this tide of passion 'gainst myself.
Wherefore advance we farther? In these thresholds
Where equally my immolated spouse
Is witness to the deed, without delay
Let him be pacified.—To me that sword;
Myself... with my own arm to strike thee now...

Ægis. Bared to thy blow behold my breast. Ah
mother!...

Pol. Pause..

Me. Let him die.

Pol. Ah! pause..

Polyp. Thus darest thou?...

Me. Perfidious wretch!... What now?... Thou
weepest, tremblest,
And I, I cannot smite him!...

Polyp. What means this?

There is some mystery here! Speak, old man, speak.

Pol. For pity's sake..

Polyp. Speak.

Me. Let me smite him now.

Pol. He is..

Me. Who, who?

Polyp. Quick... Speak..

Pol. He is my son.

Me. Ah? how?

Polyp. This youth thy son?

Ægis. He was my father.

Me. He lies.—But if he were, he slew my son.
Thus, die.

Pol. Ah! pause . . He is thy son.

Ægis. Oh mother . .

Me. Oh heavens!

Polyp. Her son? . .

Pol. Thou art a mother; save him.

Me. My son! . .

Polyp. What plot is this? Quick, guards, advance . .

Me. I am thy shield, oh son . . Ah, yes, of this
My heart assures me: I am yet a mother . .

Polyp. Soldiers . .

Me. No sword that has not first pierced me
Shall touch his form . .

Ægis. I clasp thee in my arms,
Oh mother! . .

Polyp. Now, what lies dost thou bring here,
Thou prating evidence of worn-out fables?

An infamous assassin; one that too

Denies not that he is such? . . He thy son? . .

Shall I believe it? Guards, dispatch him quickly.

Me. Infamous thou . . But while I breathe, my son
Is safe.

Pol. I call the heavens to witness it,
He is Cresphontes. That belt is his own:
From this alone the error sprung. To you,
Messenians, I am known; I am not perjured . .

Ægis. Do none among you recognize my face?
Of your illustrious monarch I am now
The only representative. Alas!
Is there not one that fought beneath his banners
In all this multitude?

Polyp. He lies. Dispatch him . .

Me. Me first . . No, never . .

Ægis. Ah! release my arm;

Give me a sword, a sword : by my exploits
I shall be quickly recognized.

Me. What words !

Oh real offspring of the great Alcides !
By his deportment, by his lofty speech,
Do not ye all now recognize him ? Thou,
Dost thou not recognize him by thy fear,
Oh Polyphontes ? Tremble now . . Ah no !
'Tis I that tremble ; to the earth I bend
My suppliant knees. Ah ! do thou yield to pity !
This realm of mine, which thou would'st share with
me,

(At least it seem'd so,) keep exclusively ;
Let it be always thine. The throne usurp'd,
My slaughter'd consort and my sons, all, all
I freely pardon thee : except this son,
Nothing remains to me in all the world ;
I ask no other boon ; spare him to me . .

Pol. Reflect, that in thy unestablish'd realm
Thou still hast many foes ; that thou canst not,
Without a mighty risk, destroy her son.
If I deceive thee, take my life. Erewhile
Thou didst prepare thyself with so much pomp
To avenge her for her son, hoping him dead ;
He lives, and thou would'st have him slain ?

Polyp. 'This youth
I might with justice, whosoe'er he be,
Sentence to death. But yet, still more and more,
Lady, before the eyes of all Messene,
I would convict thee of unworthy fraud.
He is no son of thine ; for thou thyself
Sawest thine own son all perish in the flames ;
And all Messene often from thy mouth

Has heard the narrative : all here, with me,
 Esteem the assertion of this one old man,
 A renegade, and doubtless bribed by thee,
 In so important an affair, a proof
 Ridiculous and vain : yet, while I wait
 For other more conclusive arguments,
 I will suppose it true.—Release him, guards.—
 Uninjured I restore him to thy arms ;
 Hence to the marriage rites proposed by me
 I hope to make thee yield . .

Ægis. Oh infamy !

Shalt thou contaminate that father's bed
 Of whom thou hast deprived me ? Rather now
 Slay me upon the spot ; 'twere a less evil . .

Me. Ah ! son ; cease now to irritate him more.
 Who knows what cruel projects he revolves ? . .
 Ah ! Polyphontes . . .

Polyp. Clear this vestibule
 Of thy auxiliary troops, Adrastes ;
 Let the accustomed guards alone remain,
 And let the people for a while give way ; . .
 It shall return . . Heardest thou what I said ? . .

SCENE THE FOURTH.

Polyphontes, Merope, Polydore, Ægisthus, Guards.

Me. What has he said to him ? . . Oh heavens ! . .
 I tremble !

Polyp. Nothing in all the world can save him, lady,
 But thy consenting to be mine. If yet
 There lurk some rebel subjects in Messene,
 I in these walls am undisputed lord.
 This fable of thy son shall be examined ;

Should I destroy him, all my after ills
 Could not to life restore him. A short space
 I grant to thy reflections.—Before sun-set,
 Here, in the presence of my household Gods,
 Thou shalt have given to me thy hand in marriage,
 Or here, before thy eyes, I shall myself
 Have slain this youth.

Me. Ah! . . hear me . .

Polyp. Chuse.—I leave thee.
 Invent at will supposititious tales;
 At least I have ye all within my power.—
 Guards, whosoe'er of these should try t' escape
 From this my palace, slay him instantly.

SCENE THE FIFTH.

*Merope, Polydore, Ægisthus, Guards at the bottom
 of the Scene.*

Me. Beloved son! . . My only son! . . I scarce
 Can think it true . . . And would I have destroy'd
 thee?

I? . . Yet my labouring and bewilder'd heart
 Felt a mysterious check . . But what hard terms
 Restore thee to me? . . Wherefore thus complain?
 All terms are easy that restore my son.

Ægis. Ah wretched me! It had been better far
 That I had perish'd in my infancy.
 Oh mother, whither, whither do I drag thee! . .

Pol. Hear me, oh queen: a dire necessity
 Constrains thee to submit. The cruel blow
 Is but delay'd from the perfidious hope
 Which hath possess'd the tyrant to gain time,
 And not increase the universal hate.

Provided that he can obtain thy hand,
He, for a time at least, will hold with thee
His hard conditions : but if thou refuse,
He will resort to sanguinary schemes,
As to the most secure. 'Tis needful now,
Now, if it ever was, for thee to shew
Thyself a mother, and nought else. 'Tis true,
To a dire sacrifice thou doom'st thyself;
But for thy son thou dost it . .

Me. For his sake

What would I not perform ? What doubt ? . .

Ægis. Oh mother ! . .

Pol. But, if it be perform'd, there then arise
A multitude of hopes. The tyrant feigns ;
I hope we may anticipate his projects.
No sooner will our ancient friends have heard
That the last son of their Cresphontes lives,
Than they will subtly stratagems devise
To rescue him from the perfidious tyrant.
If they behold him, what may we not hope !
Nothing is wanting to them but a leader . .

Ægis. And I will be that leader.

Pol. Yes, oh son . .

I dare to call thee by the accustom'd name . .
Their leader thou shalt be : within my heart
I feel a joyful presage ; since the gods
Have heretofore vouchsafed to rescue thee
From the first violence of the frantic tyrant.
Meanwhile, dissimulation for a time
Is indispensable ; thou, Merope,
Affect without reluctance to accept
The infamous conditions ; 'tis thy duty :
Thou, youthful champion, struggle to assume

Conciliatory manners, briefly such
As to root out from, or, at least in part,
Abate suspicion in the impious king ;
Whence with his own arms thou may'st triumph o'er
him ;

Thou art constrain'd to this, if it concern thee
To break those heavy chains assumed for thee
By thy devoted mother.

Ægis. Ah ! I swear
To obey thee ; swear at least while I am powerless.
Woe if a sword is offer'd to my wrath !
Ah then I only listen to my valour,
And to the prompting voice of my dead father.

Pol. Ah ! hold thy peace.—Lady, do thou consent,
That, in thy name, without delay, I go
To the usurper ; here consummate art,
And prompt decision, are alike required.
I shall know better how to feign than thou.
Grant thy consent that I may pledge thy hand :
Confide in me ; I will, if I am able,
Obtain at least a temporary respite.
If in his wish he persevere, to-day
To celebrate the impious nuptial-rites,
I place great hopes in the Messenian's aid.
Meanwhile do thou thy overweening courage,
And thou thy overweening hate, conceal.
I feel a mother's tenderness for thee ;
And furthermore I have a father's sense,
And long experience : place in me reliance.

Ægis. Oh father !

Me. Speedily, my faithful friend,
Depart ; dispose of me and my concerns.
I, with my son, will hence retire a little.

SCENE THE SIXTH.

Merope, Ægisthus.

Me. In kissing, and embracing thee, at last
Let me indulge myself.

Ægis. At what a price,
What horrible price, thou purchasest the blessing !

ACT THE FIFTH.

SCENE THE FIRST.

Polyphontes, Soldiers.

Polyp. Merope yields at last.—Adrastes, go,
And spread the tidings of my nuptial rites ;
And now, as far as the amplitude permits,
Of this my royal threshold, yield admission
To all the most distinguished citizens.
At the same time convey to Merope
Swift intimation, that I here await her
Ready with all her wishes to comply.

SCENE THE SECOND.

Polyphontes.

Polyp. Fortune, propitious hitherto to me,
Begins to wear at once a frowning aspect.
Can it be true ? That, that Cresphontes, thus,
Who has so long successfully evaded
My persevering and sagacious search,
Should now, when I the least expected it,
Appear before my eyes ? And when to death

I justly sentence him, a strange concurrence
 Of perplexed and inextricable chances,
 E'en my own ill-advised and feigned compassion,
 At once condemn, betray, and rescue him.
 If my career began with artifice,
 So in its progress I must use address;
 Till the fit time for arbitrary sway
 Returns. Messene murmurs: hence must I
 Affect more frankness and security
 Towards her in all my conduct. Merope
 Only consents to these abhorred nuptials,
 Because she is a mother; and perchance
 From hence she afterwards expects my ruin ...
 But I'll anticipate her stratagems.
 As much as to herself, these rites to me,
 Are odious: but I thence expect to reap
 Greater and earlier advantages.
 Amid the marriage-bed's security,
 A common table, and a common dwelling,
 A thousand, thousand means at every moment
 May be contrived to perpetrate the deed
 That now I cannot consummate, nor leave,
 Without great risk, in after times, half done.—

SCENE THE THIRD.

*Merope, Ægisthus, Polydore, Polyphontes, Soldiers,
 People, Priests, Victims.*

Polyp. —Oh queen, approach; thus first I give
 to thee
 Thy ancient epithet. At last thou yieldest:
 Oh! may the day be most propitious!
 Thou seest a festive pomp by me prepared

To give due splendour to the solemn act,
As far as brevity of time permitted.
That every prejudice is laid aside,
Severing our mutual interests, I wish
The nobles, and the people, priests, and gods,
To witness; that to each one is restored
His ancient privileges; and that thus
A lofty compensation I award
For every outrage suffered in my cause.

Me. —But, those, that stand around us, from thy
mouth
Have heard perchance, that I'm a mother yet?
And at what price the life of this my son
To me thou yielddest? . . .

Polyp. Erewhile, in thy name,
This old man spake to me another language.
What? Art thou changed already? Yet, if thou
Desirest to communicate thy thoughts
To this august assembly, likewise I
Wish it to share in mine. I do not shrink
From making free confession of my schemes.
Then let Messene hear me.—Here I came
A conqueror: to this throne, with this my sword,
Where yet my ancestors invited me,
I cleared myself a path. Your king subdued
Before the victor fell. I, perhaps too fierce
In that emergency, suffered his sons
To lose their innocent lives: atrocious fruit,
But one by custom sanctioned, of success.
The throne I gain'd, that throne I still retain;
But what a leader, father, judge, and king,
To all of you I since have proved myself,
Ye all can testify. Within my palace

Merope lived in full security ;
And further, as the consort of a king,
Honoured, caressed, and idolized she lived.
Yet, well I knew, that to my detriment,
For impious vengeance, she preserved a son.
Behold this youth whom she proclaims her son ;
Behold him ; see with what design he comes.

Me. Behold him, yes : this is Alcides' blood
Degraded thus . . . Ah traitor ! who reduced him
To this disgraceful state ?

Pol. Oh son, restrain
Thy just resentment . . .

Polyp. Yes, surely it is I
Who hither drag him in the character
Of a perfidious murderer. I that soiled
His impious hands with inoffensive blood.
Your lofty champion, your young hero, see !
Most incontestibly he's proved himself
The worthy progeny of Hercules,
Who now approached clandestinely to slay me :
And with another barbarous homicide
Meanwhile his inexperienced right hand accomplished
In bloody violence : and lurk'd disguised,
In generous ambush, waiting for the hour,
When he might find a passage to my breast.
Thus, in what character he comes, ye learn ;
And fraud, or artifice, or accident,
Reveals him thus to you. 'Tis in my power
To inflict on him the punishment he merits :
But my desires for peace are too sincere :
From me has Merope implored his life ;
I yield it to her ; solely on condition
That she refuse me not her hand in marriage,

And thus at length all broils betwixt us cease.
 Nor this suffices : if this be her offspring,
 Since other sons I have not, him I chuse
 My successor.—What ought I to do more ?—
 Ought I indeed to do so much as this ?—
 —And you, Messenians, heretofore accustomed
 To the dominion of a hoary warrior,
 Would you swear fealty to a beardless youth,
 Nursed in obscurity, to himself unknown,
 Who hitherto no presage of himself,
 Or one that is discouraging, hath given ;
 Who ignorant of the arts of government . . .

Ægis. Ignorant ? I am, 'tis true, of arts like thine ;
 I am not, no, of those Alcides practised :
 And shall give proofs of this . . .

Pol. Ah ! hold thy peace :
 Why thus exasperate him ? Thou seest it ;
 Too numerous are his satellites : each man,
 From terror, here is mute.

Polyp. No, ye are mute,
 Messenians, by profound amazement stricken
 At my incautious lenity. My words,
 I clearly see, have thoroughly convinced you :
 And furthermore improvident I seem,
 Now that to these I wholly trust myself ;
 And since their hearts already have been made
 To me so manifest. 'Tis true ; but yet
 I wish, whate'er the cost, to make to them
 A memorable and sublime atonement
 For my past victory.—Now, Merope,
 On thy decision I depend : erewhile
 I gain'd thy suffrage ; wouldst thou now retract it ?

Me —This universal petrifying silence

But too peremptorily forebodes my doom,—
My son—yes, let my death ensure his life ;
This duty dictates.—Oh thou unavenged,
And sorrowing shade of my adored Cresphontes,
Pardon the involuntary breach of faith !
By thee I was a mother ; for thy son
To these funereal marriage-rites I come.
Oh son, thou call'st me to a bitter trial . . .
But I am recompensed abundantly,
If thou remain'st alive . . . Can it be true,
That I am thus by violence constrained ? . . .
Oh ye, in former times, of this youth's father
The faithful subjects, can ye witness us
Reduced to such extremity ? . . .

Polyp. Make haste . . .

Me. Ah ! be not thou incensed : a few words
more,

And I shall cease to speak.—Hear thou, oh son,
My latest admonitions. Do thou bend
That brow where ineffectual pride sits throned
To the despotic conqueror : I, alas !
Can only now afford thee an example
Of desperate passiveness · and how to bear,
With dumb inflexibility, the worst.
Now only, by preventing his desires,
By silent acquiescence, by attempts
To wear at least humility's exterior,
By never mentioning thy father's name ;
Now only by these arts may'st thou perchance
Divest his thoughts from blood. Ere long wilt thou
See me for ever to the tomb consigned :
Do thou meanwhile, though difficult to obey,
Carefully treasure up these my last words.

Ægis. Oh wretched mother! . . .

But can I be persuaded to drag on
A life like this, bought at so vast a price?
To pine in servitude is not to live
To natures such as mine. Do thou live on,
Beloved mother; and permit that I
Die, at least worthy my exalted father.

Polyp. 'Tis past all sufferance, this delay of thine,
Oh Merope. The kingdom, perfect peace,
Thy son, these I restore to thee at once.
Whence are these tears? Hopest thou to excite
My subjects to rebellion? I confide
In their fidelity. E'en if I would,
Each of them now sees clearly that, for thee,
I could do nothing more.—Resolve; on high
O'er the bull's neck the sacred axe impends.
Behold my right hand; thine, oh Merope,
Is now by me expected as the signal,
To immolate the victim to the gods.

Me. What am I doing? . . . Oh despair! . . . Oh
day! . . .
Oh terrible moment! . . . Here's my right hand
then . . .

But, oh! distracted, bloody, menacing,
Cresphontes interposes! . . . Where am I? . . .
Ah! . . . whither shall I fly? . . . Messenians, pity . . .

Ægis. Oh rage! and shall I suffer this? . . .

Pol. Be silent! . . .

On thee already does the tyrant dart
His rabid eyes . . .

Polyp. No more. Yet once again,
Oh lady, do I offer it to thee:
Behold my right hand.

Me. Oh distraction! . . . Mine . . .

Ægis. Die thou.¹ This is the right hand due to thee.

Pol. Audacious youth!

Me. What do I see?

Ægis. Die thou.²

Polyp. Oh treason! ... Guards ... I die ...

Guards. He is a traitor;

Slay him.

People. No! rescue him; he is our king.³

Me. He is my son, I swear to you; your king...

Ægis. Far other proofs will I give you of this.

And this my single hatchet shall disperse
Javelins and swords.⁴

Me. Messenians, ah defend him ...

Pol. I breathe again .. Behold the tyrant's troops
Already are dispersed ...

Me. Oh son, return! ...

Ah wretched me! ...

Pol. Through blood I will pursue him :
Had I my youthful arm ! But, for his sake,
I will lay down my life.—Ah ! hear me, son :
Return : rush not so rashly forward ; ah !
Let me alone perish in thy defence ...

Ægis. At length we've conquered them. Rejoice,
oh mother ;

Thou seest the mercenary soldiers fly,
Fly to a man : Adrastes, by my hands,

¹ Having seized the axe from the hand of the priest, he darts towards Polyphontes, and levels him to the earth with a blow.

² He repeats the blow.

³ The people assault the guards.

⁴ He darts among the combatants.

Lies lifeless ; and the citizens in crowds
Flock more and more . . .

Me. He is my son, Messenians !
He is Cresphontes ; he is your true king :
Do you not recognize him by his face,
His voice, his looks, his unexampled valour,
And, more than all, by my maternal love ? . . .

Pol. And by my oath which now confirms her
words ?

Oh you, Messenians, by my hoary looks,
By my integrity well known to you,
By the remembrance of that great Cresphontes,
Rather to us a father than a king ;
I do conjure you yield implicit faith
To my asseveration. I myself
Rescued him from Messene ; brought him up . . .

Ægis. Messenians, there, stretched lifeless on the
earth,

(Do you behold him) Polyphontes lies :
I slew him ; I alone avail'd to avenge
My father, and my brothers, and my mother,
Myself, and you : if hence I guilty seem
To you, I yield myself to you alone.—
Behold, the axe, which for such deeds sufficed,
I cast it on the earth : behold me now
Wholly defenceless, wholly in your power :
If I have shed the blood of these unjustly,
Be mine in retribution shed by you.

People. Oh generous, noble youth ! In every thing
His father he resembles . . .

Me. And in him
Cresphontes lives again . . .

People. Auspicious day ! . . .

Thou art our rightful king.

Pol. And worthy king.

Let me first, humbly prostrate at thy feet,

Offer to thee my reverential homage!

And, citizens, do ye all kneel with me.

People. To thee we all swear everlasting faith.

'Thou wilt be just as thou art valiant :

That lofty aspect cannot be deceitful.

Ægis. I swear to be so. And if I be not,

May I, as this usurper, lifeless fall.

Pol. Ah! why on this day do I not expire?

Ne'er should I die more happy.

Me. Oh, my son,

Come to my breast. But ah! .. from .. too much ..
joy ...

I feel myself o'erwhelmed.

Ægis. Oh, mother! .. She

Sinks lifeless from immoderate emotion.

To some more still apartment let us lead her—

Hither, Messenians, I ere long return,

To unfold to you the mysteries of my fate.—

Thou, my good father, follow me; do thou

Still deem me less thy monarch, than thy son.

MARY STUART.

A TRAGEDY.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

MARY.

ORMOND.

HENRY.

MURRAY.

BOTHWELL.

SCENE,—The palace in Edinburgh.

ACT THE FIRST.

SCENE THE FIRST.

Mary, Murray.

Mur. If thou darest hear the truth, oh queen, I
dare

To thee express it, since thy faithful people
Of this esteem me capable ; and since
Around the throne there are none who incline,
Or dare to speak it. In my breast I bear
A flame, not fed by human sympathies,
Which, caught from him, aspires to God alone.

Ma. Your licence yields no small encouragement
(Whether by me indulged, or snatched by you)
To popular licence. Your unhallowed schemes,
Beneath the sacred shelter of the church,
Securely flourish : ye are now detected.

But, that it may be manifest that I
Hear truth as fearlessly as thou canst speak it,
I listen to thee ; speak.

Mur. It grieveth me
That I have not found favour in thy sight ;
But perhaps I now may serve thee ; to do this
Will be more meritorious than to please thee.
These tears of mine are not dissembled tears :
Nor are they prompted by fallacious fear :
These tears are representative of those
Which all thy people shed, this voice of mine
The organ of all hearts.—Now answer me ;
I, in all Scotland's name, the question ask ;
Tell me, art thou a widow or a consort ?
Is he, whom thou thyself hast, by thy side,
Placed on the throne, who has the name of king,
Is he thy spouse ? or enemy, or slave ?

Ma. Henry a slave, or enemy, to me ?
How speakest thou ? My lover and my spouse
My heart accounts him always ; but of his
Who can affirm the same ?

Mur. He, far from thee,
Can ill appreciate thy genuine thoughts ;
Thou his still worse.

Ma. Who keeps him far from me ?
'Tis self-imposed, this exile from the court.
How many times have I invited him
To return here ? Yet erewhile, when I was
Reduced by sickness to the brink of death,
Did he not only never visit me,
But never once sought tidings of my welfare ?
This was the best reward of my affection ;
I pass o'er others ; and I pass it o'er,

That from my vassal I made him your king,
And for a long time mine; that for his sake
To the most powerful kings of Christendom
My right hand I refused;—but I would fain
Confer, and not remember, benefits.
Perhaps e'en now the many unjust insults
By Henry shewn to me, I might forget,
If I beheld in him, on their account,
Even the flattery of feigned remorse.

Mur. Thy cold reception banished him from thee,
The whispers of the court, the audacious looks
Of servile satellites, perfidious smiles,
Nods, and inquisitorial insolence,
And all the arts devised by courtly men
To wound, yet cast the wrong upon the wounded;
Arts not alone effectual to drive thence
A man, distinguished by a monarch's name,
But one the most enduring and most passive.

Ma. And when each individual of this court,
As emulous to win his favour, smiled,
Was his deportment different? The torch
Of Hymen still for us was here illumed,
And I perceived already, that his heart
Was, of the throne, and not of me, enamoured.
How oft, alas! my lukewarm royal bed
I bathed with tears! How oft to heaven complained
Of the importuning rank, by which I lost
That best of human blessings, the sole good
That sheds some sweetness in life's bitter cup,
Loving, and being loved! Yet, though exempt
From false and overweening self-esteem,
I saw myself e'en in the flower of youth,
That youth adorned with more than common beauty;

I felt myself (and thence had more to give,
Than either youth or beauty can impart)
With real love inflamed. What gain'd I hence?
I bore the cruellest of human insults.
Prodigal of my honour, as of his,
Rizio he murdered with an impious hand;
Eternal blot to both . . .

Mur. And what? Is that
E'en yet by thee remember'd? A vile stranger
Raised to supreme command, at once displeased
Thy consort, and thy people . . .

Ma. But should he
Have made himself the assassin of that stranger?
How could he act so that men might infer
That I burned towards him with flagitious love?
Just God, thou know'st it well!—To me was Rizio
A faithful counsellor, profoundly skill'd
In all the various characters of men,
A minister expert: and by his means
I steered securely 'mid conflicting parties:
Vain, by his means, were the perfidious snares,
So oft repeated, of Elizabeth,
My bitter, indefatigable foe:
Lastly, by his means, Henry, with my hand,
My sceptre gain'd. Nor did he feel contempt,
Proud as he was, and crafty in his pride,
For the vile stranger, while he saw in him
The instrument by which he was to gain
The distant crown. He gain'd it: and from him
What recompense did Rizio thence receive?
Amidst the quiet shades of night, beneath
My royal roof, 'mid hospitable rites,
The sacred confidence of privacy,

'Midst helpless ladies, and before my eyes,
Bearing within my womb the first dear pledge
Of our unhappy loves, he comes by stealth
For trait'rous purposes, and dares defile,
With blood, as guiltless as it was ignoble,
My table, my apartment, and my dress,
Nay e'en my person, and what's more, my fame.

Mur. Rizio was raised unduly. To a king,
Can any circumstance be more offensive,
Than to derive his honours from a subject ?
He who once gave might take away the throne ;
And he who thus might take it, is by kings
Hated and slain. But yet, to thy revenge
Henry surrendered his accomplices :
With blood, methinks, for blood thou mad'st atone-
ment.—

I come not here to speak in Henry's praise :
He is inferior to the throne ; who knows
Not this ? But I come hither to remind thee
That he's thy consort : that from him there springs
The sceptre's only heir. On you reverts
A heavy scandal from your private jars ;
And we are menaced with impending danger.
'Tis said, that he returns to-day : ere this
He hath returned ; but evermore from hence,
More gloomy hath retired, and afterwards
A deeper sadness hover'd o'er thy palace.
Let him not come in vain to-day, I pray thee :
Enough, too many jarring elements
This realm contains within itself. I see
Religion, by a thousand different sects
Trodden to earth, profess'd and disobey'd.
The consummation of our woes would be

Royal dissention ; ah, avert it, queen !
Without the poison of a flattering tongue,
From a sincere heart, fervently I speak.

Ma. I trust to thy professions : but enough.
Now the first audience ought I soon to give
To the ambassador from England.—Go—
Leave me :—Know thou, and say it, if thou wilt,
To all my people, that, of my good fame,
I live not so regardless, as to need
That others now remind me of my duty.
That which by love of truth thou art compelled
To say to me, do thou repeat to Henry,
To whom 'twere more adapted. If he can,
Let him, without resentment, or alarm,
This thy free language hear, to which, in proof
Of an offenceless conscience, I have listened.

SCENE THE SECOND.

Mary.

Ma. Ye lying demagogues of the blind vulgar,
Ye instigators of an impious sect,
Must I be doom'd eternally to hear
Your arrogant harangues ?—Of all the griefs
That plant the throne, on which I sit, with thorns,
These are the hardest to endure : yet I
Am forced to endure them, till my tarnished throne
Resume, by my means, all its original brightness.

SCENE THE THIRD.

Mary, Ormond.

Or. Oh queen, to thee, the messenger of peace,

And the confirmer of eternal friendship,
Elizabeth hath sent me : in her name,
In every enterprize, I offer thee
Her powerful assistance.

Ma. I already
Know by experience what her friendship is ;
Hence mayest thou infer the extent of mine.

Or. Hence I derive the confidence, and courage,
To intercede with thee . . .

Ma. For whom ?

Or. Thou knowest
That marriage-rites have not yet shackled her ;
That of her throne thy son is hitherto
The only successor : may it please thee,
For the dear sake of this beloved child,
The hope of both these realms, precious to us,
No less than to thyself, to banish from thee
All rancour that thy heart may entertain
Against his father. Thou, at all events,
Would'st chuse him for thy spouse ; and can it now
Be true, that a precipitate divorce
Should sever him from thee ? . . .

Ma. And who has spread
Such tales of me ? False be they, or malignant,
Yet if the threshold of Elizabeth
Haply they reach, must they find faith in her ?
Not e'en a single project of divorce
I ever entertained : yet were it so,
What meanest thou ? Could that to *her* give umbrage,
Whom to my nuptials formerly I found
So utterly averse ?

Or. Elizabeth,
Though never envious of thy happiness,

Was jealous of thy honour. She applied
Counsel both frank and friendly, to thy free
And royal judgment. She dissuaded thee
From nuptials perhaps somewhat less illustrious,
Than might befit an independent princess ;
But nothing more. Persuaded thoroughly
Of thy fixed resolution, she was silent ;
Nor do I think that blame to her attaches,
If thou art not in perfect happiness.

Ma. 'Tis true: kept she not in hard fetters bound
Henry, whom I had chosen for my consort,
So, that a fugitive from prison, he
Came to my royal bed ; and his right hand,
Yet livid from the pressure of her chains,
To my right hand he joined ? does she not now,
In a well-guarded tower, within her realm,
Retain by force the mother of my spouse ?
'Tis well becoming her, indeed, to feel,
To-day, compassion for her former prisoner.—
Thou should'st from this most exquisite distress
Relieve her, by assuring her, that Henry
Lives, at his pleasure, in full liberty,
Within its precincts, or remote from court ;
That from my heart I have not banished him ;
And that I never knew, nor know I now,
To investigate the private cares of others.

Or. Nor does Elizabeth, within thy palace,
Presume to penetrate, more than is fitting,
With curious indiscretion. Royal secrets,
Though known to all, to every king are sacred.
I am commanded to suggest to thee
Respectfully, that to a double realm,
One heir alone affords a hope too scanty ;

And that the existence of a single child
Has much of casualty and incertitude.

Ma. This most magnanimous solicitude
Of her great heart hath in my heart inspired
Reciprocal solicitude. I *yet*
Cherish the hope to be again a mother :
And *yet* to make *her* happy, who partakes
In all my joys, with a new numerous offspring.
But if she is as prodigal of aid
As of advice to me, I hope ere long
To see in perfect peace, not only this
My palace, but my realm.

Or. To obtain such peace,
I in her name now venture to propose
As the best means . . .

Ma. They are ?

Or. No doubtful means.
She wishes thee somewhat more mild to those
Who not thy yoke, but that of Rome, have spurn'd.
E'en as thy other, these are faithful subjects,
And far surpassing them in strength and numbers ;
They feel as men, and are thy loyal sons ,
To whom their different creed alone procures
Such disproportionate oppression.

SCENE THE FOURTH.

Mary, Ormond, Bothwell.

Ma. Ah, come ; oh Bothwell, enter these apart-
ments.

Hear what incredible advice, to me,
The representative of England's queen
Brings, in his mistress' name. She wishes me
More mild towards the heretics ; she wishes

Myself and Henry indivisible ;
And trembles lest divorce should sever us.

Both. Now who could give her of thy government
Such false impressions? What religious sect
Hast thou e'er persecuted? Who to-day
Dares even to pronounce the word divorce?
This day, on which Henry returns to thee . .

Or. To-day, say'st thou?

Ma. Yes . . Now thou see'st how I
Anticipate Elizabeth's desires.

Or. Deceitful fame exempts not even kings.—
Laden with false intelligence it came
E'en to my mistress : as there came to thee
A character of her not less fallacious,
Which painted her thy foe. I entertain
(Perhaps 'tis self-flattery) the lofty hope
Of being of your genuine sentiments
The not unwelcome true interpreter,
While, in compliance with the will of each,
A station in thy presence I maintain
No less felicitous than dignified.

Ma. Oft are the deeds of those, by lofty rank
Exposed to scrutiny, perversely judged :
Mine, hitherto by innocence inspired,
Shrink from no witnesses. Be they made known
By thee to Elizabeth : meanwhile, as well
For thy own sake as her's who sent thee hither,
Thou wilt be always honour'd in my court.

SCENE THE FIFTH.

Mary, Bothwell.

Ma. Hard to endure ! Well do I know her hate

And rancour ; yet am I constrain'd to admit
And honour her delator. With new arts
She now assails me. Recommends the good
That I may do it not. She asks of me
To grant a toleration to the sects ;
Then, that I persecute them, in her heart
She wishes. She dissuades me from divorce ;
Ah ! then she hopes to hasten it. I know
That much as ever sceptred mortal err'd,
She wills that I should err. With her own arts
I shall know how to parry her attacks.
I will, by granting her dissembled wishes,
More and more torture her malignant heart.

Both. Thou know'st I said this to thee, when thou
deign'dst

To unfold thy thoughts to me. Henry should not
Now be remote from thee for various reasons.
Whether his menaces to quit the realm
Be true or feign'd, thou ought'st to take from him
The means of doing it, by watching over him.

Ma. The shame of such a flight would fall on me.
His throne, his son, his country, and his consort,
Quitting, and begging a precarious shelter ;
Who that beholds him thus will deem me guiltless ?
I will not be a fable to the world ;
Rather will I embrace the worst misfortunes.

Both. Thou hast well chosen. Oh ! were this the
day

That full domestic peace return'd once more !
Since he to thy solicitations yields,
To which he hitherto was deaf, at length
Thou mayest hope.

Ma. Yes, I would fain believe it.

At length, a true, though late remorse, for all
His past ingratitude, conducts him here.
He still will find me to himself unchanged :
And, if I see him penitent, disposed
To pardon all the past.

Both. Ah ! were he so !

Thou know'st full well how much I wish thee happy.

Ma. The recollection of my debt to thee
Will never quit my mind. Thou hast avenged
The throne insulted by the foes of Rizio,
By their just punishment. I found in thee
A sure defender in the camp, against
The open rebels ; 'gainst the hidden ones,
More despicable far, to me wert thou
A faithful counsellor within my court.
Thou hast at once contrived to disconcert
Henry's imprudent plots, and recollect
That that same Henry was thy sovereign's husband.

Both. Fatal address ! Ah ! may there no more be
Occasion for exerting it !

Ma. Ah ! yes . .

If Henry hear me, and believe my love,
(Which he alone believes not,) I may yet
Hope for all happiness. The throne to me
Is far less precious than my husband's heart.
But let us hear him ; I have hopes e'en yet :
Heaven may do much ; fortune may be propitious . .
But where I would of counsel or address
Avail myself, thou more than other men
My projects canst promote.

Both. My arm, my blood,
My substance, and my judgment, (if indeed
I be so gifted,) all, oh queen, are thine.

ACT THE SECOND.

SCENE THE FIRST.

Henry, Murray.

Hen. Yes, I repeat it to thee, I come hither
To wreak full vengeance on my enemies,
Or bid eternal farewell to these walls.

Mur. Thou doest well. But thou should'st not, oh
king,

Flatter thyself with prosperous event
To thy designs, while thou dost steel thy heart
Against its inward conflicts of remorse,
Against the frequently-repeated signs
Of an offended God. Thou long hast been
Fully convinced of the errors of the faith
That thou professest : the dire vestiges,
At every step, by thousands and by thousands,
Of thy perverse and persecuting sect
Crowd on thy path : yet dar'st thou not shake off
The guilty yoke of sacrilegious Rome ;
Whence in the sight of all the world thou art
Despised, and impious in the sight of God.
This is the first, too plainly, and, alas !
This the sole cause of thy adversity.

Hen. More than convinced I am that I ought not
E'er to have sought this fatal royal marriage :
Not that the rank to which it raises me
O'erwhelms my faculties ; this very sceptre
Was no unknown weight to my ancestors.
But I regret that I reflected not

What a capricious and unstable thing
The heart of woman is; and what a weight
A benefit imposes, when received
From one that is not skill'd to give it wisely.

Mur. My soul is not cast in a vulgar mould:
Hear me, oh Henry. Favour in the court
I do not seek: the love of peace inspires me.
'Tis in thy power for all thy past mistakes
To make a full atonement, and to win
To paths of virtue thy bewilder'd consort;
To make thy people blest: the chosen sons,
Not of the terrible God of wrath and blood,
(Whose earthly type is fulminating Rome,)
But the true sons of the compassionate God,
Who are iniquitously trodden down,
These may'st thou rescue; and may'st dissipate
The impure mists, which from the Tyber's stream,
The corrupt source of tyranny and fraud,
With pestilential influence arise.

Hen. And what? wilt thou that I mispend my time
In disputations vain about vain rites,
And frivolous subtleties of brain-sick fools,
When I am loudly call'd on to defend
My honour and my rank?

Mur. Dar'st thou miscall
These questions vain, When they a thousand times
Have ta'en away and given realms and lives?
If thy heart feels a just contempt for Rome,
Why not confess it? Raise thy standard high,
And thou shalt have as many partizans
As there are here who execrate her rites.

Hen. I do not feed myself with civil bloodshed:
To seek elsewhere that peace I have not here . . .

Mur. What are thy hopes? Will it bring peace
to thee

To see from distant climes thy native country
Burn with intestine broils? For to fly hence
Is but assuredly to give the signal
For civil war.—To arms I prompt thee not;
I am not, no, the minister of blood.
To frustrate more atrocious grievances,
And from oppression liberate thy friends,
Ere to rebellion they be driven, to this,
Nought else, do I exhort thee. Violence
Thou should'st not use; but hinder that of others.
Mary, who with her foreign milk imbibed
As at a fountain inexhaustible
Foreign delusions; Mary, who unites,
For Scotland's ruin, in her youthful breast
The persecuting principles of Rome
With the soft manners of effeminate France,
I do not bid thee ever to forget
That the same Mary is thy spouse and sovereign:
Leave her at her own will to think and act:
We have not learn'd her persecuting tenets;
We wish alone for liberty and peace:
May they be gain'd through thee! Thou mayest at
once
Procure thy peace and ours. An obscure storm
I see, which threatens us, which also may
Fall on thy head, if thou refuse to hear me.
The vilest miscreants in these precincts lurk,
And lurk in numbers, who would ruin thee,
And who at once calumniate and detest thee.
In vain thou would'st among them hope to find
Sincerity and honour; we are they,

If yet indeed there be true Scots ; of Rome,
Of guilty, foreign, and effeminate fashions
The inveterate foes ; and equally the foes
Of foreign and augmenting tyranny.
Would'st be the moderate king of worthy men ?
'Tis yet within thy power : would'st rather be
The tyrant of the guilty ? There are they
Who wish this more than thou. There are who have
Already made a sceptre of the sword :
The knot is too perplex'd ; it must be cut,
It cannot be unloosed. Why thus I speak
Heaven knows ; and if I wish for aught but peace.
Act then according to thy judgment : I
Already have resign'd the hope that truth
Should by a king be e'er from me believed.

SCENE THE SECOND.

Henry.

Hen. Murray may be sincere ; but my hard fate
Hath so o'erruled me that the choice of errors
Alone remains for me.—Already all
Convinces me that I return in vain :
Each tongue is dumb ; and the reluctant queen
Delays to welcome me ; and all the rest . . .
Oh rage ! . . But she approaches : be she heard ;
I shall be better able to resolve
After this conference.

SCENE THE THIRD.

Henry, Mary.

Ma. Thou'rt welcome here,

Thou, whom I chose for all my griefs and joys
The inseparable partner. Thou at last
Compliest, and dost listen to my prayers :
At length within thy palace thou returnest ;
That it is always thine thou knowest well,
Although in voluntary banishment
From thence it pleases thee to live so far.

Hen. Queen . .

Ma. Why thus call me? Why not call me consort?

Hen. Say, are our destinies the same?

Ma. Ah! no;

Thou mak'st me spend my tedious days in tears . .

Hen. My tears thou seest not . .

Ma. I have beheld thee

Bedew, 'tis true, thy cheek with tears of rage,
Never of love.

Hen. Be the cause what it may,
I wept, and still I weep.

Ma. And who can cure
This ceaseless grief, who wipe my tearful eyes,
Who to my heart restore pure genuine joy,
Who, if not thou?

Hen. Which of us has the power,
And having that, the will, will soon be seen.
Meanwhile I tell thee that to-day I do not
Come to repeated insults . .

Ma. Why wilt thou,
Oh heaven! thus irritate before thou hearest me?
If thou deem it an insult to behold
Other men's judgments not submit to thine,
Here oft, I grant, but always spite of me,
Wert thou insulted. Their immunities

Monarchs possess, and monarchies their laws,
And their infringement is to all injurious;
Nor dared I hinder thee from breaking them,
Than as I should myself have been restrain'd
If an unwise desire had prompted me
To arbitrary power. But if of me,
If of my heart thou speakest, of my love
For thee, and of my private fondnesses,
Beloved consort, what part of myself
Have I not given thee unreservedly?
My lord and my support, say, wert not thou
My first, my last, my sole solicitude?
And thou wilt evermore be so, if thou
Wilt only lay aside thy unjust wrath,
And far as usage of the law permits,
E'en now indeed wilt be lord of the realm,
And, without any limitation, mine.

Hen. The ostentation I esteem an insult;
The haughty manners towards myself adopted
By the audacious ministers, or friends,
Or slaves, or counsellors, or parasites,
For I know not how I should designate
Those that around thee stand. And I esteem
That which I meet with every day an insult;
To be still flatter'd by the name of king,
While I'm not only of the power bereft,
But even of the superficial pomp
That waits on royalty; to see myself
Rather in servitude than liberty;
My motions and my words, my deeds and thoughts,
Investigated all, and all betray'd;
Bereft of every solace of a father;
Not only not to be allow'd to watch
The education of my only son,

But from his presence to be interdicted ;
And myself only.—Why should I say more ?
What boots it to enumerate one by one
My many wrongs ? Thou know'st how comfortless,
How much neglected, and how much oppress'd,
Degraded, and perhaps how much betray'd,
Is he whom thou unluckily hast chosen
The partner of thy throne, yet having chosen,
Whom self-respect forbids thee to despise.

Ma. Perhaps I also might reply to thee
That thy incautious actions have alone
So far reduced thee ; and I might suggest,
With what unworthy recompense at first
Thou didst return my love ; that more intent
To subjugate, than, with benignant arts,
To gain the minds of Scotland's haughty chiefs,
Impatient of restraint, thou lost them quite ;
And too much trusting in thy faithless friends,
At first thou drewest from their intercourse
Pernicious counsels, treason afterwards,
And detriment, and forfeiture of love.
I might speak further . . But can I proceed ? . .
Ah, no ! . . That is a superficial love
Which watches, blames, or does presume to judge
The imperfections of the beloved object.
To oblivion everlastingly by me
Be these consign'd. If it can soothe thy heart
That I should seem the injurer, not the injured,
So let it be : 'tis unimportant to me
Where lies the cause, so that we both escape,
And chiefly thou, all baneful consequence.
Do thou and all thy friends calm thoughts resume :
Open once more thy breast to confidence ;

Nor let fantastic thoughts of novelty
Thy judgment captivate. Within thy palace
Reigning, learn thou the arts of government.
I do not dare propose myself to thee
As one well skill'd in such a complex art ;
For inexpert, I oftentimes have err'd :
My immature capacity, my sex,
And perhaps a natural defect of judgment,
In many indiscretions have involved me.
I only know, as far as in me lies,
To chuse sagacious and just counsellors ;
And, hence assisted, with a trembling foot
To try the vast and formidable lists
Of perilous royalty. Ah ! were I skill'd
In reigning as I am in loving thee !

Hen. But, save thy husband, each man in the court
Appears a just sagacious counsellor :
And he's the only one in whom designs
Of private benefit may not abide ..

Ma. Or at least ought not.—But refrain awhile :
Thou in my heart hast fix'd suspicion's wound ;
And do thou heal it. Not that I retain,
I swear to thee, the recollection of it,
Much less its rancour : ah, believe my words.
But separation does not strengthen love,
Nor mitigate suspicion. By my side
Stand evermore ; I shall esteem that day
For ever fortunate on which I shall
Be able to give, in exchange for one,
A thousand proofs of love. Malignant spies,
I know, there are not wanting, who delight
Betwixt us to maintain disgraceful discord,
And seek perhaps to foment it. But, if thou

Wilt evermore be near me, in whom else,
Better than in thyself, can I confide?

Hen. I hear seducing words, but I endure
Deeds of increasing rancour.

Ma. But what would'st thou?
Speak; and I will do all.

Hen. I would, in fact,
Be father, consort, king; or of these names
I will divest myself..

Ma. Thou would'st have all
Except my heart. And more than thy demand
Refusal wounds my soul. Ah! would to heaven
That thou at least with this wert satisfied.
Yes, far as in me lies, thou shalt have all;
I only ask of thee, that thou preserve
Some decency towards me before the world;
And that henceforward thou repeat no more
Thy ancient exhibition of contempt.
Ah! if thou love me not, let others think,
At least, that thou esteemest me! To this
I do conjure thee by the common pledge
Not of thy love, but mine. Thou shalt again
Behold our only, our beloved son;
To thy paternal arms shall he be brought;
That thou art a king, a consort, and a father,
May he remind thee.

Hen. I am well aware
What is my duty; if I have appear'd
Unequal to its weight, the fault was theirs
Who have from me transferr'd it to themselves.
To-day am I resolved, e'en more than others,
To recompense affection with affection,
But artifice with scorn.—This single day

Will be sufficient to bring all to light.
I in the faces of thy friends shall see,
The court's implicit rule, thy secret thoughts.

SCENE THE FOURTH.

Mary, Bothwell.

Both. May I approach, the exulting spectator
Of thy recovered joy? Thy husband, say,
Of what complexion are his present thoughts?
Is he reform'd? . .

Ma. Inflexibly the same.
What do I say? He to his former rage
Unites a smile of bitter irony;
And turns to ridicule my earnest words.
Ah, wretched me! What means have I now left
To soften his asperity? I speak
Of love; he speaks of power: I am the injured,
Yet he the plaintiff. By ambitious thoughts,
Yet destitute of all sublimity,
His bosom is attainted and depraved.

Both. But what does he demand?

Ma. Absolute power.

Both. Hast thou that to confer?

Ma. He now would deem
That power a bauble which I gave to him
Ere he compell'd me to resume the gift.
He has entirely yielded to oblivion
The perils whence I rescued him.

Both. Yet thou
Canst not, without incurring blame, refuse
To share that power of which thyself art mistress
With him that is thy husband. That which he

Possess'd before, that which the laws give to him,
E'en at thy risk thou must restore him all.

Ma. I still should have, if I could love him less,
E'en more than one resource : to suffer him,
Left to himself, headlong to rush at once
In numberless inextricable snares ;
For the result can ne'er be prosperous
Of his ill-plann'd and worse-transacted schemes.
But I exist, assail'd on every side
By an o'erwhelming tempest. His misfortunes,
In one respect, affect me more than him ; ..
But yet, if he alone prefers his ruin ..
Still will that ruin be a heavy blow
To me, come when it may.—And then . . my son ! ..
Oh heaven ! if towards my son my thoughts I turn,
On whom, perchance, the errors of his father
May one day fall ! .. I am no longer able ..

Both. Queen, thou desir'st me not to flatter thee :
And I impose it on myself to serve thee.
A mother's and a consort's love alone
Combat within thy bosom. Save thy son,
Thou should'st give all to Henry.

Ma. And that son
Precisely, more than all the rest, he asks.

Both. But is he thine to give ? Say, is he not
Rather our public pledge ? Where were the wonder
If he, a guilty spouse, proved a worse father ?

Ma. But yet, to quiet his perturbed spirit,
I promised him ..

Both. Thy son ? He to rule him ?
Take heed.

Ma. He to rule him ? I myself venture not
To do it ; and to others shall I yield him ?

Both. 'Tis then but a precautionary step,
Lest others take him from thee?

Ma. —'To *what* tend
These thy insinuations? Perhaps thou knowest . .

Both. I? . . Nothing . . . But I think that perhaps
by chance

Henry to-day return'd not. Hitherto
I've been the first to cut off all the means
Whence the vain threats of Henry (whether feign'd
Or real) e'er could be reported to thee
By the informers that in courts abound.
But to more culpable contrivances
Should he direct his thoughts, whate'er the risk,
'Twould be my duty to reveal to thee,
Not what he says, but what he aims to do.

Ma. He hath been hitherto assuredly
To my repeated invitations deaf . .
And now, who knows? . . But speak . . . perhaps to-
day

Some indirect and circumventing purpose
May bring him back to court.

Both. I do not think it;
But I should be a witless counsellor
If I from time to time suggested not
Precautionary thoughts of what may be.
He never was assail'd for this his son
With overweening fondness: wherefore then
Demand him now? Ormond likewise pretends
Anxious desire to see the royal youth:
And he brings with him all the stratagems
Of his most crafty queen: all may be fear'd;
Yet nothing there may be; but on the throne
Blind trust is an unpardonable fault.

Ma. Must I for ever from one agony
Be driven to another? Wretched fate!..
Yet what can I now do?

Both. Watch while I watch;
Thou canst do nought beside: if it be false,
My fear can do no harm; if true, some good.
Under what pretext seems most plausible,
Only contrive that Henry now should have
Apartments separate from these in which
The *royal youth* resides; and leave *him* here
Guarded by thy most faithful partizans
Unintermittingly. Do thou henceforward
Go from this place, and occupy with Henry
As a more cheerful or more healthy dwelling,
The ancient castle which commands the city:
There may'st thou quickly see what influence
Thy love has o'er him: Thus thou clear'st his path,
If thoughts of reformation sway his will;
And thus, if evil purposes possess him,
Preventest him from injuring e'en himself.

Ma. Wise is thy counsel; I adhere to it:
Do thou meanwhile for my security,
Glory, and peace, efficient means invent,
And gentle ones, whence I may frustrate ills
Past remedy, if gathering strength from time.

ACT THE THIRD.

SCENE THE FIRST.

Henry.

Hen. No, delay profits not; nor should I now
Temporise longer. Spite of my desire,
A treacherous pageantry of honour waits me:

Why is this unaccustomed dwelling place
To me assign'd? .. 'Tis true, beneath one roof
Innocence and imposture ill unite ;
The treacherous palace is no home for me :
But the insult is too manifest ; too manifest
The implied mistrust. Let me decide at last,
At last adopt some measures.—Ormond seeks
To speak to me ; let him be heard. Perchance
He may suggest, when I the least expect it,
Some remedy, some project of deliverance.

SCENE THE SECOND.

Henry, Ormond.

Hen. To this new court, which has no parallel,
Thou'rt welcome, Ormond.

Or. Thy vicissitudes
To us are too well known. Elizabeth,
A mere spectator, hither sends me not :
But, her heart full of grief for thee, she wills
That I should be 'twixt you the instrument
Of perfect peace.

Hen. Peace? Where there is not found
Entire equality, peace? Oftentimes
Have I been flatter'd with so fond a hope,
But still have been deceived.

Or. But yet, methinks,
This day to peace is sacred . .

Hen. Thou'rt deceived.
To pass all bounds of sufferance with me
This is the day selected : and at once
'This is the day on which I have resolved
No more to suffer.

Or. What! dost thou believe
That the queen's heart is not towards thee sincere?

Hen. Her heart? Who sees it? But not even
words

Hear I from her, in which I may confide.

Or. If she deceive thee, thy disdain is just.
Although I come the messenger of peace,
Yet I presume (instructed thus to act,
If it were needful, by Elizabeth)
To offer thee, whiche'er best suit thy wishes,
Advice, assistance, or to be thy guide.

Hen. If in my heart ignoble passions dwelt,
Without assistance, I could means devise,
And certain means of vengeance. But alas!
Nor guide, nor guardian friend are there, who now
Were competent to clear the obstructed path
For the attainment of the peace I wish.
Oh, bitter is the state in which I live!
If towards violence I turn my thoughts,
If then indeed not criminal, forthwith,
I seem at least ungrateful: yet, again,
If I in part relent, the insolence,
And the presumption, of those courtly slaves,
Who are the origin of every ill,
Beyond all bounds I foster. Thence I fix,
Amid the many schemes I might pursue,
On nothing long: and to them all prefer
To go from hence in voluntary exile.

Or. What would'st thou do, oh king? This re-
medy,

If I might be allowed to speak to thee,
Appears to me worse than the ill itself.

Hen. So it seems not to me: and I expect

That hence more injury would fall on others,
Than shame upon myself.

Or. But know'st thou not,
That an expatriated king excites
Rather contempt than pity? And should he
Even excite compassion, would he thence
Be ever satisfied?

Hen. When power is gone,
What profits arrogance? I now am here,
Of all men least, a monarch not obeyed.

Or. But thou in changing climes, would'st thou
obtain
The privileges private men enjoy?
Or of a monarch's name divest thyself?
Ah! since thou givest me with thy discourse
Boldness to speak, let me convince thee of it.—
Whither direct thy steps? To France? Reflect
That there to Mary is the royal race
Allied by blood and friendship; that all there
Applaud her character, where she at first
Imbided their soft insinuating customs.
There thou wilt find a messenger from Rome,
Furnished with pardons and indulgences,
Ready to invade, if thou givest place to him,
This miserable realm. Thus to thy foes
Thou wilt thyself surrender: instantly
They will contrive to prove thee criminal.

Hen. And do I live surrounded here by friends?

Or. Thou livest in thy kingdom—I should add
To thee, in vain, how the perfidious Spaniard,
The effeminate Italian, an asylum,
The onc precarious, the other infamous,
Would offer to thy person: I proceed:

(And thence thou may'st infer if I speak truth)
I, in the first place, counsel thee to fly
To Elizabeth for shelter.

Hen. Shall a land

Be my asylum where I once was prisoner?
I never entertained so wild a thought:
There is my mother forcibly confined . . .

Or. Dost thou not see it clearly? Much less free,
And less secure, here would thy mother be
Than she is there. I controvert it not;
Elizabeth was adverse to thee once:
But royal counsels change with change of times.
Scarce did she see from you an heir arise,
Of her no less than his maternal realm,
Than she, entirely pacified, towards him,
As towards her offspring, turned her every thought;
And more reluctant from this time became
To yield herself to the connubial yoke.
Afterwards hearing that thou had'st incurred
The disesteem of Mary; and that those
Who had thrown off the servitude of Rome
Pined in oppression, that the royal child,
E'en with his milk, perniciously imbibed
Errors of superstition, much she grieved.
Hence she commanded me, if towards thyself
Mary changed not her conduct, to direct
To thee alone the instructions I received;
And means I offer thee, (not means of blood,
For as thyself I hold those means accursed)
By which thou wilt infallibly regain
All thy primeval splendour,—in one word,
By which thou may'st be free; propitiate
Elizabeth; to thy beloved son

Secure a loftier, and a safer station ;
Snatch Mary from imposture ; disconcert
Thy guilty foes ; all this, if so thou wilt,
Quickly thou may'st perform.

Hen. What dost thou mean ?

Or. That which is possible to do : which thou
Alone canst do, others not e'en attempt.—
The royal heir, thy son, will be the means
Of thy advancement, and at once of peace . . .

Hen. How ? . . .

Or. In these thresholds maxims are instilled
That will confirm his servitude to Rome ;
He that is destined one day to possess
The united sceptres of Britannia's isle.
Elizabeth, and with her, all her realm,
With vigilant and apprehensive looks,
Behold this threaten'd bias : recent yet
Are in my country the inflicted wounds,
With which another Mary tortured her,
At the instigation of the Spanish Philip.
Eternal, and immitigable hate,
And such devotion of heroic rage,
Hath Spain to us bequeath'd, that each of us
Had rather perish, than again obey
The abhorred and cruel ritual of blood.
Thy son will be compelled to disavow
The Roman worship, should the day arrive,
When he is called to fill the British throne ;
Were it not better for himself, for us,
That he should ne'er imbibe a heresy,
Which, would he be our king, he must recant ?

Hen. Who denies this ? And thou perhaps think-
est me

More in my heart attached to Rome than others?
But how can I, according to my judgment,
Bring up my son, whose very intercourse
To me is interdicted?

Or. But would'st thou
Be master of his person, by that step
Thou would'st gain all.

Hen. Hence is he taken from me.

Or. And hence should'st thou recover him.

Hen. But guards
Watch always.

Or. These may be deceived, be bribed . . .

Hen. And grant that I obtain him; afterwards
How shall I keep him . . .

Or. I will keep him for thee.
Beneath Elizabeth's protecting eye
He shall grow up: and she will be to him
More than a mother. Fed with lofty thoughts,
There shall he learn to reign; let me avail
Only to rescue him from hence, and thou
Shalt quickly see thyself the master here.
Elizabeth shall make thee be proclaimed,
During his adolescence, for thy son,
The sovereign-regent of this realm; henceforth
Thou may'st assign thy spouse what part seems best
Of delegated power; precisely that, in short,
Which she appears to thee to merit.

Hen. —This
Is a momentous scheme . . .

Or. Does it offend thee?

Hen. No; but it seems of difficult performance.

Or. Be but audacious; all will then be easy.—

Hen. We have conferred too long. Leave me awhile :

I would reflect upon it at my leisure.—

Or. Ere long then I return to thee : the time Is urgent . . .

Hen. When the night is far advanced,
And unobserved, as much as possible,
Return to me.

Or. I will at thy commands
Come here. Meanwhile, oh Henry, recollect,
That blows when least expected always fall
The most severe ; that purposes of state
Require it ; and that thou wilt hence derive
Both honour and advantage to thyself.

SCENE THE THIRD.

Henry.

Hen. I hence win honour, if I win advantage.—
This is a mighty scheme, and mighty ills
May hence originate . . . But yet, what ills ?
Though it bestead me not, so circumstanced
Am I, that nothing now can injure me . . .
Who comes ? What can that man now seek from
me ?

SCENE THE FOURTH.

Henry, Bothwell.

Hen. What wantest thou with me ? Bring'st thou
perchance
The accustomed homage to thy pageant king ?

Both. Although thou treatest me with such disdain,

I, not the less, am still thy faithful subject.
To thee the queen dispatch'd me : she has learn'd,
That thou, as of an insult, bitterly
Complainest of the abode assign'd to thee.
Know, that she means, ere long, hither to come
With thee to dwell : and further I am bound
To say to thee . . .

Hen. More than the different dwelling,
Far more, it mortifies me to observe
That every word I utter is repeated :
Yet this injustice is not new to me.
Now go ; and tell her, that, if I ought not
To deem myself thence injured, such excuse
Although not more believed, at least had been
More welcome from her lips ; and not by means
Of an ambassador . . .

Both. If thou would'st lend
To her a somewhat more benignant ear,
My lord, far other sentiments than these
Thou would'st hear from her lips : nor should I be
The messenger selected : but, she fears
Lest that her words to thee . . .

Hen. She apprehends
To wound me with her words, and at once seeks
To do it with her deeds.

Both. Thou art deceived.
I know how much she loves thee ; and in proof,
I, though unwelcome to thee, though by thee
Suspected wrongfully, addressed myself
To bring to thee a message so important,
That to another than myself the queen

Would not confide it : it is such that thou
Art bound to hear it ; neither from her lips
Would Mary venture to express it to thee :
A message, that 'tis difficult to speak,
But yet, which, if conveyed as she suggested,
As the expostulation of a friend,
Clearly denotes no lukewarm tenderness.

Hen. Com'st thou the interpreter of nuptial secrets ?—

Thou, who art thou ?

Both. Since thou would'st fain forget
The action of Dunbar, whence, having first
The rebels slain, I reconducted you
Both here in safety to your throne ; I am
One who, because it is imposed on him,
Now speaks to thee.

Hen. But it is not imposed
On me to hear thee.

Both. Yet thou hearest others.

Hen. What say'st thou ? Others ? . . . What audacity ? . . .

Both. Thou in these thresholds art betrayed ; but
not

By those whom thou mistrustest. Thou thyself,
E'en more than all of us, should'st doubt a man,
To whom the function of ambassador,
Impulse and opportunity affords
To perfidy unpunished. To ourselves
Ormond comes not the messenger of peace ;
And yet thou hearest him at length ; . . .

Hen. Ye traitors !—

Is this to me imputed as a crime ?
E'en as ye are perfidious ye are vile ;

Ye twist to evil every deed of mine.
Ormond the entreated audience obtain'd :
I sought him not : ambassador to me
He came not here . . .

Both. Assuredly he came
Contriving machinations 'gainst thyself.
Were he alone a traitor ! But already
E'en more defective in dexterity
Than in discretion, he has proved himself.
Far too precipitately he divulged
His hidden hopes, his culpable designs :
With this incaution he betray'd himself
So prematurely, that before he spoke
With thee, the queen already knew the whole.
Nor thence, for him, whom he would fain delude,
Has the queen's bosom so much wrath conceived
As generous pity. In her name, oh king,
I do adjure thee to renounce thy error ;
Nor with thy own dishonour, do thou bring
Advantage to the traitor, detriment
To her who loves thee.

Hen. —More explicitly
Speak thou, or cease to speak. Mysterious words
I do not comprehend : I only know,
That where ye all of you alike are traitrous,
I can among you scarcely recognize
Which of you is the traitor.

Both. 'Tis most easy
To see who most would profit by thy ruin.
Elizabeth, your persevering foe,
Your envious, crafty, and ferocious foe,
Dreads peace betwixt you. What canst hope from
her ?

Hen. From her? . . . *I* nothing hope, and nothing ask . . .
And nothing . . . But what knowest thou? Speak on:
What is alleged against me? What believes,
And what says, Mary? . . .

Both. When a heart is generous,
There need no others to reprove its faults.
What ought I now to say? Except that Ormond
Is an incendiary; that snares are laid
For thy destruction; and that for thy son,
Thy innocent son, Mary, with many tears,
Conjures thee now . . .

Hen. Oh! wherefore does she weep? . . .
Thou layest snares for me . . .

Both. My lord, thou art
Thy own deceiver; I do not deceive thee.
The schemes of Ormond were already known:
Already from his indiscreet expressions,
Before he came here to propose it to thee,
That impious stratagem transpired . . .

Hen. To me? . . .
How darest thou, miscreant, thus speak to me? . . .
If thou proceedest, I will make thee . . .

Both. Thus,
My lord, I have fulfill'd the task imposed.

Hen. And I my toleration have exhausted.

Both. I spoke, because I was impell'd by duty.

Hen. Beyond thy duty hast thou spoken. Hence.

Both. What to the queen must I report?

Hen. Go; tell her . . .
That thou art rash.

Both. My lord . . .

Hen. What; not yet gone?

SCENE THE FIFTH.

Henry.

Hen. All, all are base ; and I am like the rest,—
Oh, dark abyss of infamy and fraud !
Ah fool, that could, in an ambassador
Sent from Elizabeth, place confidence . . .

SCENE THE SIXTH.

Henry, Ormond.

Hen. Return'st thou here so soon?

Or. One doubt alone

Remains unsatisfied : hence I return . . .

Hen. Thou witless traitor ! darest thou in my
sight
Appear again ?

Or. Alas ! what has befallen ?

Hen. Say, didst thou hope that I should not discover,
From whence thy fraudulent proposals sprung ?
And further, hopest thou that they should remain
Unpunish'd ?

Or. Whence so unexpectedly
Art thou thus changed ? . . . Erewhile thou spakest
to me . . .

Hen. Erewhile I wished to see, to what a length
Thy hostile and insidious stratagems,
Beneath a mask of peace, would carry thee.—
But didst thou ever think that I would deign
To supplicate in your deceitful realm
Assistance for myself, or for my son

A perilous asylum ?

Or. If I was

The artificer of fraud with thee, think'st thou
That it was now my fault ?

Hen. It was the fault

Both of thyself, and her who sent thee here,
And of thy hated function . . .

Or. Rather say

Of the abhorred court in which I'm stationed :
The crime was hatch'd in this perfidious soil.
Should I have ever, of my own accord,
Presumed to tamper with thee ? In such guilt
Mary involved me ; to whose will, in all things,
Elizabeth commanded me to yield.
That which she will'd I said : and now, of this,
A double treachery, accuses me
To thee.—Oh no, I shall not be deceived ;
May heaven permit, henceforth, that I engage
In no transaction with a race like this.
Whatever here may be the consequence,
I feel that I am innocent ; such now
Do I proclaim myself ; and such elsewhere
I shall proclaim myself with loftier voice.

SCENE THE SEVENTH.

Henry.

Hen. Thou say'st the truth ; whose guilt is like to
hers ?

I am the laughing-stock of all. Oh rage !—
Once more shall this perfidious woman hear me,
Yet once more hear my voice. I am compell'd
To give the last indulgence to my rage

In a few words ; but afterwards 'tis time
To try more rigorous efficacious measures.

ACT THE FOURTH.

SCENE THE FIRST.

Henry, Mary.

Hen. Queen, I abhor deceit ; it serves me not ;
And, if it served me, I would not adopt it.
But thou, why dost thou clothe perfidious schemes,
With simulated love ? I have, I know,
Offended thee ; but openly I did it.
Thou should'st from me have learn'd at least the
rules
By which 'tis lawful to offend an equal.

Ma. What words are these ? What hast thou met
with, say ?
Or ere firm peace betwixt us is renew'd,
I hear already . . .

Hen. Peace 'twixt us, say'st thou ?
I swear betwixt us everlasting discord :
Avow thy purposes ; and copy me :
I would, at last, to thee point out the way,
By which thou may'st pour out thy fathomless,
And pent-up rancour ; I would spare to thee
Further deceptions, further flatteries,
And further crimes.

Ma. Oh heavens ! and such rebuke
Do I deserve from thee ?

Hen. 'Tis fitly said.
Thy guilt at length to such a pitch is risen,
That all rebukes are vain. Disdainful silence

Were more judicious ; to thy crimes more fitted :—
But yet, this transient utterance somewhat soothes
me ;

And, for the last time, now to make thee hear
This voice, which to thy conscience-stricken heart
Is not supportable. Means of redress,
Less infamous, and more effectual far
Than thine, are in my power. In thousand ways
I might, within thy realm, make head against thee :
Nor does thy power divert me from the purpose :
Myself alone commands inaction here :
I would not in our private broils involve
This unoffending people.—But to-morrow
Thou shalt hear tidings of my destiny :
And may I never more behold thy face.
To thy remorse, (if even that remains)
And to thy faithful counsellors, I leave thee.

Ma. Ungrateful . . . with more fitting epithet
Not to address thee . . . of my boundless love
Is this the recompense ? My sufferance long ?
My unexampled sufferance ? . . . Speak'st thou thus ? ..
Thus clear'st thee of thy fault ?—Whence thy con-
tempt ?

Dost thou no more remember who I am ?
And who thou wert ? Ah, pardon, pardon me ;
Thou now compellest me to adopt a language,
To her that speaks it, far more than to him
Who hears it. insupportable. But how,
In what have I offended thee ? By thus
Inviting thee, entreating thy return ?
By the unguarded warmth of my reception ?
By yielding thee too much ? By deeming thee
Accessible to penitential thoughts,

Or wise resolves, or thy hard heart possess'd
E'en of a momentary gratitude.

Hen. The throne thou fillest : and the throne was
ever

Prolific in conclusive arguments.

But I am not amazed : whate'er has happen'd
Confirms the fears of my foreboding heart.

Yet, is it fitting that I should assure thee
I never had recourse to artifice ;
That I have not, so much as thou may'st deem,
A weak, a headstrong, or an abject spirit ;
And 'that thy shameful arts . . .

Ma. Act as thou wilt :

I only do beseech thee not to soil
Thy language towards me with injurious phrases ;
Thence equally unworthy him who speaks,
And her constrain'd to hear them.

Hen. Evermore

In words do I offend thee ; thou in deeds
Offendest me. Is the remembrance fled ? . . .

Ma. Profound remembrance in my heart I keep
Of the remonstrances so often utter'd,
And so much disregarded ; faithful, true,
And wise remonstrances, which, what thou art,
Thy manners, and thy dispositions, painted,
Ere I bestowed on thee this hand of mine.—
Blinded by love, I would not see, believe . . .
Who then dissembled ? . . . Speak, ungrateful, speak . .
Alas, alas !—Repentance now is late,
And fruitless . . . Oh my God ! . . . and is it true
That thou, at all events, would'st rather I
Should be thy foe ? . . . That thou canst never make
me.

Thou plainly seest, that thou canst scarcely raise
A transient flame of anger in my breast :
One word of thine, one little word, suffices
To cancel every provocation past :
Provided thou would'st hear it, my affection
Is ready still to whisper to my heart
All its too welcome flatteries. Oh my husband,
Why wilt thou not, whate'er it be, confess
The reason of thy recent discontent ?
Quickly will I . . .

Hen. Art thou desirous then
To hear it from my lips ; although it is
Well known to thee, no less than to myself ?
Thou shalt be satisfied without delay.
'Tis not thy feign'd affection ; not thy feign'd,
And flattering words ; not the allotted dwelling ;
'Tis not the separation from my son ;
The promise of supreme authority
Changed into more intolerable wrongs ;
I do not, no, of all these things complain :
These with the usual tenor correspond
Of thy deportment towards me ; all the fault
Is mine, that I believed thee. But the wrong,
The only wrong that I cannot endure,
Is that which thou hast recently contrived.
And what ? At last thou call'st Elizabeth,
In the so many indiscreet offences
With which thou plottest hourly to annoy me,
The false Elizabeth to take a part ?

Ma. What dost thou now allege against me ?

What ?

And say what proof hast thou ? . . .

Hen. Ormond, 'tis true,

Is, but is not like others here, perfidious :
In vain thou sentest him to flatter me,
To tempt, to promise, to seduce. Didst thou
E'er hear of such a plot ? At all events,
To wish to goad me into treachery ?
Whence pretexts thou might'st afterwards derive
For thy concealed iniquity . . .

Ma. What do I hear ?
May heaven to ashes instantly reduce me,
If I e'er . . .

Hen. Perjury avails not here.
At once I recognized the artifice,
And, the deceiver to deceive, I feign'd
To yield to his entreaties : but I loathe,
And I am wearied of, such abject arts.
Ormond already has received from me
A final answer. Now Elizabeth
Will scorn thee, who detested thee before,
And she will be the first to blame, and raise
A clamorous outcry 'gainst those very crimes,
To which herself impell'd thee.

Ma. This is all
A vile imposture. Who thus dares to soil
My name with guilt ? . . .

Hen. Thy minions possess
Souls thoroughly imbued with perfidy.
Do not afflict thyself: they have but shewn
Themselves not fully skill'd in choice of time.
Bothwell and Ormond, nobly emulous
To fathom the recesses of my heart,
Have both their own, and thine, too much exposed.

Ma. —If reason could have influence o'er thy
soul,

Or wert thou in a state to hear it now,
It would be easy here to explain the whole ;
To call them both together ; and to hear . . .

Hen. I be confronted with such men as these ? ..

Ma. And how by any other means can I
Convince thee of the truth ? How from thine eyes
Remove the bandage ?

Hen. 'Tis removed already :
I see too clearly . . . —yet would'st thou at once
Convince me, and my apprehensions quell ?
To thee but one infallible resource
Remains for this. From thee too I require
The execrable head of haughty Bothwell ;
And Ormond's instant banishment—With this,
Say, art thou ready to comply ?

Ma. At length
I see, (alas, too evidently see !)
To what thy wishes tend. Whoe'er he be
That may communicate to me the truth,
Is for that cause alone obnoxious to thee :
He, be he who he may, in whom I trust,
Becomes thy foe. Quickly, renew at once
The massacre of Rizio : thou art used
With thy own hands to execute thy vile
And unjust vengeance. Thou may'st destroy,
In the same generous, heroic guise,
The life of Bothwell. To interdict thy crimes
I have no power : reason forbids that I
Should imitate thee in these bloody rites.
Let Bothwell be condemned, if he is guilty ;
But let him first be heard. While I disdain not
To subject e'en myself to the tribunal
Of solemn, and irrefragable justice,

E'en the most abject individual here
Shall I dare subject to despotic power?

Hen. Here guilty men can always challenge favour,

While from the worthy justice stands aloof:
See, what it is to reign.—I take my leave;
Farewell.

Ma. Ah! hear me...

Hen. I intend to pass

In the allotted fortress this last night,
Which I devote to anguish, not to sleep.—
The invitation I accept; a dwelling,
Which I am not constrain'd to share with thee,
Is welcome to me, till to-morrow's dawn
Beholds me far from thy abhorred city.
I thought indeed e'en yet to excite in thee
Some perturbation; but I fondly thought it.—
Thy face is tranquil as thy heart is false.

SCENE THE THIRD.

Mary.

Ma. —Ah wretched me! ... Where am I? ...
What, alas!

Can I now do? ... What fury goads him on? ...
Whence can these infamous suspicions rise? ...
In what does he confide? ... In my despised,
Yet, as he deems, my undiminished love? ...
But, if he should attempt? ... Here he must stay ..
If he departs from hence, he will excite,
In every one he meets, hatred for me,
Rather than pity for himself: Heaven knows

That I no otherwise am culpable,
Than that too much I loved him, and too little
Discern'd him as he is. What will now say
The inipious sects, accustomed so long time
To rail with bitterest calumnies against me?
These every day increase in strength and numbers..
Perchance on these the unworthy Henry leans...
Doubts, difficulties, errors, dangers, fears,
On all sides I discover. To resolve
Is perilous; to hesitate is worse...

SCENE THE THIRD.

Mary, Bothwell.

Ma. Bothwell, approach : if thou with thy advice
Canst not alleviate my distracted state,
Perchance I stand upon the very brink
Of a tremendous precipice.

Both. Alas!

Long hast thou stood there; but now more than
ever...

Ma. And what? With Henry's thoughts art thou
acquainted?..

Both. I know the deeds of Henry. But, oh queen,
Say have I e'er presumed to approach thy presence
The accuser of another, much less then
Of him who is thy husband? Yet to-day
Necessity compels me e'en to this.

Ma. Then plots have been contrived?...

Both. Contrived, say'st thou?
They had e'en now, had Bothwell not been here,
Been executed. Thou art well aware

That I suggested how much it behoved
To watch o'er Henry unremittingly,
And learn the real cause of his return :
But, ere 'twas long, of all his purposes
I gain'd a full discovery. Ormond sought
A private audience ; tamper'd with his faith ;
With flatteries and promises assail'd him :
Then dared he to propose to him, and gain'd,
That he should yield to him thy son . .

Ma. My son !
To Ormond ! . .

Both. Yes ; that he might bear him hence ;
And at once place him in the English court.

Ma. Ah traitor ! . . Thus despoil me of my son ? . .
And yield him to her hands ? . .

Both. A recompence
For this his treachery, Henry covenants
That he exclusively should rule this realm.
He thence designs to dictate laws to thee,
To trample more and more beneath his feet
The sacred rites of Rome, and to devote
(Unnatural father !) everlastingly
His own son to perdition . .

Ma. Say no more.
With horror am I stricken ! . . And erewhile
He had so much audacity, that he
Himself to me imputed all the guilt
Of this abominable artifice.—
He said that Ormond was impell'd by me
To execute this project ; that such snares
Were all of my contrivance : base accuser !

Both. He had recourse to subterfuge with thee,
Fearing that thou his treachery hadst discover'd.

I erewhile, in thy name, presumed to try
Dissuasive arguments: for such a fault
He sought to excuse himself, but found no means:
He cannot, nor knows how to contradict it:
Hence he burst forth in such immoderate rage
That what at first in me was mere surmise,
Became conviction. I to Ormond ran;
And the weak judgment, the precarious faith,
The irresolution, the inconstancy
Of Henry I display'd to him; and feign'd
That that same Henry had incautiously
To me, in part, the stratagem divulged.
Ormond, although well versed in courtly arts,
Yet thought himself betray'd, and suddenly
Changing his views, denied it not to me;
Yet he asserted Henry was the first
To counsel him to seize the child; that he
Quickly determined to reveal to thee
The whole of this design; and that he feign'd
With him, expressly for this purpose only,
To consent to it. Then I also feign'd
To yield to him full credence; and at length
So far prevail'd on him, that he himself
Now comes to thee with a sincere confession
Of every thing that happen'd. Wilt thou hear him?
He waits thy summons..

Ma. Let him come, and quickly.

SCENE THE FOURTH.

*Mary.**Ma.* My son! . . . What have I heard? . . . my son
surrender'd

To that most cruel, envious, crafty queen!
And who surrenders him to her? His father;
His very father thus betrays his blood,
His honour, and himself! Was there, alas!
Such guilt e'er found united in one man
With such infatuation?

SCENE THE FIFTH.

*Mary, Bothwell, Ormond.**Ma.* Speak the truth;
Confess what Henry said to thee.*Or.* He . . . yes . . .
He bitterly deplored the disesteem
In which all hold him here.*Ma.* It is not now
The time to soften down his words. The mask
Take off; confess to me his rash proposals,
And thy rash promises.*Or.* 'Tis true . . . that he . . .
Sought . . . to obtain of me, . . . in his behalf, . . .
The interference . . . of Elizabeth.*Ma.* Now by sincerity alone thou canst
Defend thyself. I know the whole affair.
What boots concealment? 'Twere in vain for thee
To seek to elude confession. In the event,
Henry himself, as cautious in performing,

As in contriving projects, had betray'd
Himself, and Ormond, and Elizabeth :
But from thy lips I fain would hear the truth.

Or. Henry complain'd to me that in these walls
His offspring, destined for a double realm,
Was train'd perniciously : hence he himself
Determined to surrender him in hostage
To Elizabeth, a pledge of his good faith . .

Ma. Oh unexampled father ! And didst thou
Consent to this ?

Or. . . By a direct refusal
I would not quench his hopes too suddenly . .
I feign'd consent, to learn his further purpose . .

Ma. Let this suffice ; no more. Elizabeth,
The artificer of fraudulent designs,
Hither dispatch'd thee : but, as I conceive,
Of fraudulent designs more subtly plann'd.
Retire now ; that which on thy own account
Thou dost not merit, to thy rank I yield.
Elizabeth meanwhile shall learn from me,
That an ambassador to me is due,
More dexterous at least, if not more faithful.

SCENE THE SIXTH.

Mary, Bothwell.

Both. There's art, but mistimed art, in all his
words.

'Twixt truth and lies how clumsily he shuffles !
'Tis well that he's found out in time.

Ma. I find not in me in this hour of need
Or strength to act, or wisdom to explore :
By doubts, by anger, and by fear, at once

I feel my heart as if asunder torn;
And, would'st thou think it? still that heart retains
I know not what of hope . .

Both. And I too hope,
That now, since the discover'd plot's defeated,
No others lurk behind it.

Ma. Be it so.
Yet such is he, that now that he perceives
His foolish enterprize discover'd . .

Both. He! . .
What can he do?

Ma. He may forsake my realm.
His cruel, last farewell, already he . .

Both. Forsake thy realm!—Even before 'twas
known,
This new aggression, thou didst interdict
With justice such a step: more just would be
That interdiction now; now that perchance,
As an atonement for his frustrate schemes,
Others he would devise in foreign climes
With more successful boldness.

Ma. 'Tis most just:
I oft have thought of th's; but yet . .

Both. Who knows
Where his malignant steps might carry him?
Who knows what succour he might dare solicit? . .
He would obtain it; yes, too certainly
In others' rancour he would surely find
A firm alliance.—Thou should'st now select
The lesser evil . .

Ma. But what may that be?

Both. Better than I thou know'st it. But to have
Recourse to violence shocks thy noble heart . .

Yet, what would'st thou? Would'st thou that Henry
find

Protection from Elizabeth? If he
In person treat with her, far other plots . .

Ma. Oh fatal day! and perhaps the harbinger
Of others still more fatal! Is it true
That thou at length art come? . . Disastrous day!
And apprehended long! . . Ah wretched me!
'Gainst him who heretofore has shared my love,
Who shared the fondest wishes of my heart,
Shall I use violence? . . I cannot do it . .
And, come what may come, I can never do it.

Both. But think how deeply he may injure thee? . .

Ma. What injury can he inflict, that equals
The loss of his affection?

Both. Should he once
Make good his flight from hence, assuredly
Thou ne'er would'st see him more . .

Ma. Oh heaven forbid!
May I not lose him quite . .

Both. And dost thou not,
Much as thy husband, love thy son, oh mother?
That son is now in everlasting danger;
Death of the soul, the only real death,
Errors corrupting and heretical,
Await, thou know'st, his youthful innocence.

Mary. Assuredly I ought . . but how, alas! . .

Both. If Henry's liberty were somewhat lessen'd,
Or round his sacred royal person placed
Some slight impediments to its abuse . .

Ma. He's too impatient of controul already:
Remorse, disgrace, and turbulent despair,
Might make him still more headstrong than he is,

And all my faithless and rebellious subjects
Would be his partizans.

Both. I now perceive
One means by which thou may'st accomplish this,
And yet excite no tumult. One, no more.—
The night descends: surround with armed men
Amid its shades, the hill, where singly towers
His royal dwelling. There is he ere now
Retired, to wait there for the dawn of day,
And then depart from thence: he has with him
There a few obscure friends. There may he stay,
Courteously guarded: no one will attempt
Thus to lay hands on him; and thus at once
Thou mak'st his rage abortive. Through this night
No man to him can penetrate: to-morrow
To thy just arguments for this allow
Free circulation; and to him allow
Permission to impugn them if he can.

Ma. This seems the safest plan; but yet..

Both. Ah! think,
Thou hast no other.

Ma. But, in the execution..

Both. I will take care of that, if thou desirest.

Ma. But should perchance the orders be exceed-
ed? ..

Be on thy guard..

Both. What dost thou apprehend?
That I'm incompetent to the execution?
But, ere we miss the occasion, time is short;
I fly..

Ma. Ah no; .. stay here..

Both. For once, at least,
I will use violence with thee: recollect,

I saved thee once before . .

Ma. I know it ; but . .

Both. Confide in me.

SCENE THE SEVENTH.

Mary.

Ma. Ah ! no . . Suspend . . He flies.
Oh fatal and irrevocable moment !
Upon a thread my peace and fame now hang.

ACT THE FIFTH.

SCENE THE FIRST.

Mary, Murray.

Mur. Laying aside all ceremonious forms,
Anxious and breathless, I presume to come,
At an unusual hour, to thy apartments.
Oh what a night is this !

Ma. What would'st thou now ?

Mur. What hast thou done ? Who thus has coun-
sell'd thee ?

In the recesses of thy palace now
Canst thou securely sit, while armed men
And military cries surround thy consort ?

Ma. But whence this boldness in thee ? . . All will
see

To-morrow that I've robb'd him of no power,
Except the power of injuring himself.

Mur. Whate'er the motive, the effect is mon-
strous,
'Tis cruel, terrible, and unexampled ;

And far more raises fury in the people
Than strikes them with alarm. Now, well reflect :
There are perhaps who deceive thee : perhaps I come
In time to re-enlighten thee. To us,
From guilty satellites that inundate
All quarters of the city, in their hands
Bearing lugubrious torches and drawn swords,
Mischief alone can rise. What do these troops
Around the rock where stands the royal dwelling,
Rank'd in a circle, with ferocious looks
Keeping each man at distance ?

Ma. For my deeds
Am I accountable to thee ? Correct
Are my designs. They shall be known to those
Who ought to know them. Dost thou place thy trust
In the audacious people ?

Mur. In myself
I trust alone, and in that God of truth
Of whom I am the minister. From me
Life thou may'st take, but not sincerity,
And free and lofty speech . . . Beside thy spouse
Destroy me if thou wilt ; but hear me first.

Ma. What words are these ? oh heavens ! . . . and
do I wish
My husband's blood ? and who with this can charge
me ? . .

Mur. Oh spectacle of woe !—The unwarlike stag
Pants in the bloody and ferocious claws
Of the infuriate tygress . . . See, already
She tears him piecemeal . . . Tremulous he falls,
He dies ; . . and was . . . Ah ! who forbears from weep-
ing ?
—Oh flash of lightning ! What eternal ray

Bursts on my dazzled sight? Mortal I am!—
The dense and horrible clouds, that, in their womb
Of pitchy blackness, hold the future buried,
Behold, in volumes of sulphureous smoke
They roll away, and rapidly they vanish..
What do I see? I see, ah yes, that traitor
Reeking with blood-drops yet. Perfidious traitor!
Reeking with sacred and tremendous blood,
Thou liest in the widow'd bed yet warm!
Ah, impious lady! canst thou suffer this?..

Ma. What voice is that? What accents do I hear?
Oh heaven! what saidst thou?.. Presages of terror..
He hears me not; an unaccustomed flame
Burns in his rolling eye-balls..

Mur. Even now,
Thou second Ahab's daughter, do I hear
The horrid howlings; I already see
The bloody jaws of the infuriate dogs,
By whom thy impure entrails shall be torn.—
But thou, who sit'st upon the usurp'd throne,
Son of iniquity! liv'st thou and reignest?

Ma. His bosom labours with a threatening God!..
Oh heaven! ah! hear me..

Mur. No, thou livest not:
Behold the scythe appointed to mow down
The impious harvest. Death, I hear thy shriek,
And thy invisible approach I feel.
Oh vengeance of my God! of every crime
How dost thou take account!... Heaven triumphs:
see,

See the perfidious Jezebel is torn
E'en from the arms of her adulterous husband..
Behold the traitors are betray'd.. Oh joy!

They are dissever'd . . lacerated . . slain.

Ma. Thou mak'st me tremble . . Ah! . . of whom
speak'st thou? . .

I faint . .

Mur. But what new sight? . . Oh gloomy scene!
Around a dismal scaffold I behold
Sable and sanguinary ornaments! . .
And who is this preparing to ascend it?
Oh! art thou she? Dost thou, so proud and dainty,
Bend to the cleaving axe thy lofty neck?
Another sceptred dame inflicts on thee
The mighty blow. The faithless blood spouts forth;
And lo, a thirsty spectre drinks it all
To the last drop!—Ah! would the angry heavens
Be satisfied with this? But, comet-like,
Thou drawest after thee a fatal track;
A race of wretched, proud, and abject kings
Spring from the womb of the expiring lady.
The just and horribly avenging ire
Of heaven's Almighty Monarch runs transfused
E'en with their life-blood . .

Ma. . . Wretched that I am! . .
What light, oh minister of heaven, inspires thee?
Ah! cease . . ah! cease . . I die . .

Mur. Who calls me now? . .
In vain from my affrighted eyes would'st thou
Chace this tremendous sight . . I see already
In the thick gloom the sceptred spectres throng.—
Oh! who art thou, that almost mak'st me shed
Tears of compassion? . . Ah! above thy head
The axe is lifted: now, alas! it falls.
I see thy sever'd and thy once-crown'd head
Roll'd in the dust! . . And art thou unavenged? . . -

Alas ! thou art : For thy distinguish'd head
Long had been due to a more ancient vengeance.—
How many lesser royal shades I see
Fight, fear, retreat, discomfited, in turns !
Oh lineage, fatal as thou art to others,
Destructive to thyself ! For thee the streams
Are dyed in blood .. And dost thou merit it ?
Ah, fly thou, to contaminate no more
This region with thy footsteps : go, and seek,
E'en in the breast of ignominy seek,
Connatural refuge : with idolaters,
Thy fit companions, herd : there drag along,
The throne's disgrace, the laughing-stock of men,
Scorn'd e'en in wretchedness, opprobrious days.

Ma. What do I hear ? .. Alas ! .. what unknown
power

Have thy prophetic accents o'er my heart !

Mur. Oh lofty transports of my troubled mind,
Of rapt imagination, of my full,
My labouring, yet illuminated spirit,
Whither have ye impell'd me ? .. What inspired ? ..
Where have ye led me ? .. What have I beheld ? ..
To whom have spoken ? .. Am I in the palace ? ..
The palace ! .. Oh abode of grief and death,
I fly from thee for ever.

Ma. Stop ..

Mur. Oh lady,
Say, hast thou changed thy purpose ?

Ma. Wretched me ! ..

I scarcely seem to breathe .. must I then give
Means to my foes to injure me ?

Mur. No, thou
Should'st take the means of injuring from others ;

But first discover who it is that injures.
For thy excuse I'm willing to believe
That Bothwell is not fully known to thee :
Such of that miscreant are the enormities,
That they were e'en sufficient to appal
The world's most harden'd profligates.

Ma. Oh heaven !

Should he betray me ! Yet 'twere best to doubt—
Then go to Henry instantly thyself,
And in my name, let Argyle be thy guide.
Provided that he promises on oath
Not to depart from Scotland till 'twixt us
Our mutual variances are cleared, I swear,
Ere morn, of all my troops to rid the plain.
Go, fly ; obtain but this, and then return.

SCENE THE SECOND.

Mary.

Ma. What fear oppresses me ! Alas ! .. if ever ..
But am I guilty ? Thou, who knowest all things,
Knowest that I am not — Yet in my heart
I never had more horrible forebodings ..
What can they mean ? ... And from this Murray's
lips
What fulminating imprecations roll'd '—
A night so pregnant with dismay as this
I never knew till now ..

SCENE THE THIRD.

Mary, Bothwell.

Ma. What hast thou done ?

Where hast thou dragg'd me? Say, is there yet time
For reparation? Bid thy men disperse . .

Both. What! hast thou once more changed thy
sentiments?

Ma. I never bade thee . . thou first dared'st . . .

Both. Yes,

I dared propose to thee a gentler means,
For the obtaining of thy end, than any
That thou contrived'st : and thou gav'st to me
The care of these, which I accepted. Now
Henry has seen my squadrons ; he has heard
The name of Bothwell : to and fro he runs
Along the galleries, and for desperate fight
Prepares himself. Distinctly I beheld him,
By the glare of lurid torches, come and go,
Furiously chafe, and make parade of valour.
The thunder of his menaces descends
E'en to the plain. 'Twere easy to recall
The troops ; but who could afterwards appease
The rage of Henry ? Of myself I speak not :
I were a trifling victim (if indeed
I could suffice) in such a cause as this :
But what would be thy fate ? Henry incensed . .

Ma. Ah speak, did Murray not this instant go
From hence to Henry ? . . .

Both. I beheld him not.—

Say, has that lying demagogue again
Conferr'd with thee ?

Ma. Ah yes, too certainly ! . .
Although the minister of a hostile sect,
What has he not reveal'd to me ? Oh heaven !
Fatal prognostics from his lips I heard.
Myself dispatch'd him as a messenger

To my unyielding husband : may his words
Avail, as they have penetrated mine,
To penetrate his heart ! Who knows ? such means
Oft has the invisible heavenly will elected :
Perhaps Murray is his instrument. Go, run ;
See that the king speaks with him.

Both. Murray, foe
Of our religion, at his will aspires
To sway the feeble mind of Henry ; hence
He feigns to be his friend. Arch-hypocrite !
His only passion is to head a party.
The most determined of the rebels stand
Already arm'd ; they want a man to raise
The standard of revolt ; and he will raise it.
What are their schemes, thou knowest ;—thou who,
once
Fall'n in their hands, heardest them dictate to thee
Their haughty and injurious laws : and I,
Who freed thee from them, too well recollect.—
Now, while I breathe, I swear that thou shalt not
Stoop to these men : to disobey thee now
Is loyalty. All method of approach
To every man is absolutely closed ;
And he who would attempt it, forfeits life.
In vain the most devoted of thy friends
Would there present himself ; e'en in thy name
In vain would Murray go there . .

Ma. What ! hast thou
Ventured so far ? . .

Both. I dare, and I will save thee :
I'm perfectly aware of what I do.
If thou dost not now openly convict
Henry of guilt, since thou hast offer'd him

An open insult, thou thyself art ruin'd.

Ma. Let come what may come: I had rather die
Than bring a blot upon my fame . . obey;

Thy overweening zeal may injure me:

Then quickly go, and bid the bands disperse . .

But what do I behold? . . What horrid blaze! . .

Ah! . . what a crash! Trembles the opening earth . .

Both. Oh! . . from the bursting clouds devouring
flames

Descend from heaven!

Ma. The opening doors fly back . .

Both. Oh! what a roaring in the smoky air!

Ma. Ah! whither shall I fly? . .

SCENE THE FOURTH.

Murray, Mary, Bothwell.

Mur. Where canst thou fly?

Ma. Murray! . . what means it? . . . Thou . . . re-
turn'st already?

Mur. And art thou here? Go, see thy murder'd
husband! . .

Ma. Alas! . . what do I hear? . .

Both. Murder'd! and how?

By whom?

Mur. Miscreant! by thee!

Both. What dar'st thou say? . .

Ma. Oh heaven! is Henry slain? . . But how? . .
I heard

The terrible report! . .

Mur. But . . thou art safe.

The house is blown up where thy husband sleeps,
Even from its foundation! He has found

A horrible tomb amid its ghastly ruins !

Ma. What is it that I hear ? . .

Both. Assuredly,

Henry himself, to the collected powder
Stored mid-way up the hill, in desperate fit
Set fire.

Mur. Thee, Bothwell, every one proclaims
Thee, traitor.

Ma. Sacrilegious ! hast thou dared ? . .

Both. Behold my head ; 'tis forfeited at once
To him that proves me guilty of this deed.
I ask no favour at thy hand, oh queen ;
But strict, entire, and expeditious justice.

Mur. Himself he slew not. Base malecontents
slew him . .

Ma. Oh horrible suspicion ! Pang far worse
Than that of any death ! . . Eternal blot ! . .
Oh cruel grief ! . . — Now quickly from my eyes
Let each withdraw. The truth shall be discover'd ;
And let him tremble, whosoe'er he be,
The atrocious author of a deed like this.
For vengeance now, and nothing else, I live.

Both. Oh queen, thy sorrow I indeed respect ;
But for myself I tremble not.

Mur. Alas !

Hast thou a cause to tremble ? — On this spot,
Till heaven's avenging thunderbolt is hurl'd,
The guiltless only have just cause of fear.

THE
CONSPIRACY OF THE PAZZI.
A TRAGEDY.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

| | |
|------------|------------------|
| LORENZO. | RAYMOND. |
| JULIAN. | SALVIATI. |
| BIANCA. | <i>Soldiers.</i> |
| GUGLIELMO. | |

SCENE,—The State-Palace of Florence.

ACT THE FIRST.

SCENE THE FIRST.

Guglielmo, Raymond.

Ray. To suffer, always suffer? oh my father,
Is this the only counsel thou canst give me?
Art thou become so thoroughly a slave,
That thou no longer feel'st the heavy wrongs,
The insults of the Medicean yoke?

Gu. Oh, son, I feel all keenly; and far more
I feel the public than my private wrongs.
But yet what should I do? To such a pitch
Florence by party-spirit is reduced,
That the most inoffensive word may be
Fatal to us, propitious to our tyrants.

Oh infirm state ! it is too evident,
That thou canst now change only for the worse.

Ray. Ah ! tell me where is now the state ? Or
how,

If there be one, it can be worse ? Can we
Be said to live ? Live those, who full of fear,
Who abject, and suspicious, drag along
Their infamous and pining days ? To us
What injury can arise ? That in the place
Of shameful and inefficacious tears,
Blood should perchance be shed ? And what ? Dost
thou

Call shedding blood the greatest injury ?
Thou, that, a thousand times, with noble joy,
To me, a child, the ancient times recalledst,
And execratedst these degenerate days ;
Thou now like every vulgar recreant here,
Submittest to the yoke thy passive neck ?

Gu. There was a time, I seek not to deny it,
When, urged by intolerance of our many wrongs,
And full of anger, and elastic spirits,
I would have sacrificed, without a thought,
My wealth, my honours, and my life, to crush
The usurpation of new tyrants, raised
On our misfortunes : to the fire of youth
All things seem easy ; so they seemed to me.
But finding to my great designs few friends,
And those few friends of wavering constancy ;
Beholding every year that tyranny
Struck deeper roots in this impoverished soil ;
And lastly being a father ; all induced me,
To safer, but less elevated schemes,
To turn my thoughts. The tyrants would have found

In me a weak, and ineffectual foe :
Hence sought I their alliance. I bestow'd
On thee their sister's hand. Since we no more
Flourish'd beneath the shade of liberty ;
I hence would see thee, and thy future son
Placed in the covert of the plumes, at least,
Of tyranny's audacious, spreading wings.

Ray. Protection infamous, and insecure.
Bianca, although sister of the tyrants,
Is thence not insupportable to me :
Her, and the sons which she to me has given,
Though nephews of the tyrants, I hold dear.
My blameless wife I blame not for her brothers ;
Thyself I blame alone, in having mix'd
Their blood with ours, oh father. In this act
I would not thwart thy purpose : but at last
Thou seest the fruits of such servility :
By this alliance thou didst hope to reap
Honour and influence ; and we thence have reap'd
Contempt, disparagement, and infamy.
The citizens abhor us, and with reason ;
We are the tyrants' kinsmen ; thence have they
Exchanged their hatred towards us for contempt ;
And we, who were not citizens, deserve it.—

Gu. Thou hadst found me, in other climes, oh son,
A spur to illustrious deeds, and not a check.
What it has cost my not ignoble heart
To smother indignation, and to feign
An insincere attachment, thou thyself
Canst best conceive. E'en from thy infancy
I have, 'tis true, discover'd in thy heart
'The seeds of irritable independence :
At first, I must confess, I saw with joy

This bias of thy soul ; but far more oft
 I inwardly regretted, when in thee
 I contemplated afterwards a soul
 Too free and lofty. Thence it seem'd to me
 That the consummate sweetness of Bianca
 Was not ill qualified to mitigate
 Thy perilous impetuosity.
 At length thou wert a father ; and art still so,
 As I am to my sorrow . . . Ah ! that I
 Had never been so ! Then at once with her,
 And for her, had my country seen me die.

Ray. And dared'st thou make me a father, where
 To be a father, is to be a slave ?

Gu. Ah then at least our servitude was doubtful.

Ray. Our infamy indeed was less confirm'd . . .

Gu. 'Tis true ; I hoped, since to our common
 wrongs,

All remedies were fruitless and too late,
 That thou might'st pass thy days in quietness,
 Blest in a father's and a husband's feelings . . .

Ray. But, e'en though I were sprung from other
 blood,

Can any being tranquilly enjoy
 Domestic transports in a place like this ?
 I was not, no, assuredly to these
 Vain trappings of vain magistracy, born,
 Which make him seem the first who is the last.
 For this perchance the tyrants have to-day
 Assay'd to take them from me : trappings these,
 So much the more disgraceful, as they are
 The cloak of simulated liberty.

'Twas infamous to invest me with them ; now

'Twill be as infamous to rob me of them :

Oh, cursed destiny !

Gu. Report of this
Is spread ; it even reached my ears ; but I
Cannot believe it, no . . .

Ray. Why not believe it ?
Have not they shewn us more offensive insults ?
Possessions seized, dost thou no more remember,
Our statutes changed, alone to aim at us ?
Since we ignobly made ourselves their kinsmen,
We've always been more exquisitely injured.

Gu. Hear me, oh son : and to my hoary age,
My long experience, trust. The just disdain
Which in the deep recesses of my heart
I also cherish, with rash impotence
Exhaust not thou : we yet awhile may bear :
I ne'er can think that they would take from thee
A dignity conferr'd, whate'er it be.—
But yet, should they all bounds of sufferance pass,
Be silent thou : full oft revengeful words
Defeat revengeful deeds. A lofty silence
Is the precursor of a lofty vengeance.
The courteous carriage of the tyrants towards us
Gives thee a precedent for valid hate.
Meanwhile, oh son, I would alone exhort,
And teach thee, to endure . . . Nor afterwards,
Shall I disdain, if one day it be needful,
To learn from thee how to direct the blow.

SCENE THE SECOND.

Raymond.

. . . I dare not trust in him . . . Let Salviati
First to these shores return.—My father

Discovers nothing of my purposes :
He knows not that to-day it pleases me
Rather to exasperate than appease these tyrants.—
Ah father ! would'st thou fain now be to me
A master of endurance ? Art thou he,
Than whom thy country formerly had not
A more intrepid champion ? How propense,
Gelid old-age, art thou to servitude !—
Ah ! if nought else by length of years is learn'd,
But how to tremble, to obey, to endure,
In silence to endure ; rather than learn
Such abject arts, I chuse the bitterest death.

SCENE THE THIRD.

Bianca, Raymond.

Bi. Consort, at last I find thee. Ah, with whom
Would'st thou be, if thou fliest e'en from me ?

Ray. Here, with my father, I at length conversed
A short time since : but I have not thence gain'd
Alleviation to my wrongs.

Bi. He is,
Though good in all things else, the best of fathers :
He fears not for himself ; but all his fears
Are for his children roused. The generous old man
Smothers, for us, the anger in his breast.
Believe not, no, that valour is exhausted,
Or intrepidity in him subdued :
Ah ! suffer then that I repeat it to thee ;
He is the best of fathers.

Ray. Oh ! perchance,
Thou would'st insinuate that I am not like him ?
Thou know'st if nothing else avail'd, thy prayers

Were ever potent to restrain my wrath ;
Thy prayers alone, Bianca, thy chaste love,
And thy maternal tears. I esteemed thee
Companion sweet, not sister of my foes . . .
But, does it seem to thee, to-day, that still
I ought to hold my peace ? To-day, decreed
To see my forfeiture without pretext
Of this my popular dignity ? When we
Are doomed as fugitives to quit this dwelling,
Asylum sacred once to public freedom ?

Bi. Powerful they are ; what boots it then with
words

To exasperate those who answer not, and act ?
Thy silence, better far than menaces,
Might now appease them.

Ray. And would I appease them ? . . .

—But to appease them nothing now avails . . .

Bi. Nothing ? . . . Of one blood am not I with
them ? . . .

Ray. I know it ; and I grieve for it ; be silent ;
Recall it not to mind.

Bi. And what ? For this,
Art thou, or hast thou been, less dear to me ?
Am not I ready, if to endure their sway
Is irksome to thee, wheresoe'er thou wilt
To follow thee ? or if thy haughty soul
Scorn'd not to have in me a means of peace,
Am I less ready for thyself to speak,
To weep, to pray, and even, if I ought,
By dint of force to make my brothers yield ?

Ray. To pray for me ? and whom to pray to ?
tyrants ?—

Canst thou intend it, lady ? and canst thou

Expect that I permit it ?

Bi. Riches, power,
Arms, partizans, hast thou, whence openly
Thou canst make head against them ? . . .

Ray. In my breast
A hate I cherish, equal to their hate ;
Courage superior far.

Bi. Alas ! what say'st thou ?
Would'st thou perchance attempt ? . . . Ah ! thou
may'st lose

Father, and consort, children, honour, life . . .
And what canst thou acquire ? Within thy heart
The flattering expectation cherish not :
No genuine wish in this vile people lives
For pristine austere liberty : from me
Trust this assertion. Trust to me. I, born,
And in the lap of nascent tyranny
Brought up, all its dependencies I know.
Tools thou wilt find by thousands and by thousands,
In their discourse ferocious, in their deeds
Contemptible, in time of danger nothing,
Or skilful only in betraying thee.
I am not so unnatural and cruel
That I abhor my brothers ; yet far less
Have they been loved by me, since I have seen
Their arrogance towards thee ; that arrogance
Galls my afflicted spirit. If I am
Compell'd by thee to make the fatal choice
'Twixt thee and them, by thee I am a mother,
Thy wife am I, thou art oppress'd, . . . I cannot,
Nor ought I hesitate. But thou, awhile,
Do thou resolve on nothing : the enterprize
To make thee, if not happy, safe at least,

Leave it to me ; let me at least attempt it :
Or do I not perchance yet fully know
How I, the consort of a citizen,
Ought to address a tyrant ? Yet perchance
Do I not know how far I may unite
To not invalid reasons, lofty prayers ?
Mother, wife, sister, am I not ? In whom,
If not in me, canst thou confide ?

Ray. Oh heaven !

Lady, thy words afflict me. Peace would I
Also obtain ; but not with infamy.
What to thy brothers could'st thou say for me ?
That I deserve not insult ? Well they know it ;
Hence they insult me : that I brook not wrongs ?
Why make that known which only from my lips
They ought to know ?

Bi. Ah ! . . . if to them thou speakest . . .
Alas ! . . .

Ray. What fear'st thou ? True it is, that I
Can never change my soul : but, if I will,
I can be silent. Thou, beloved Bianca,
Thou, and my sons, are always in my thoughts :
Impetuous, intolerant, audacious,
If I was born, yet not on this account
Do I let slip a word by accident :
Compose thyself ; I also wish for peace.

Bi. Yet from thy countenance do I infer
Thy heart is shaken by a frightful storm . . .
In thee I see no forerunners of peace.

Ray. I am not joyful ; but in me suspect not
Cruel designs.

Bi. I fear ; yet know not why.

Ray. Because thou lovest me.

Bi. Oh heaven ! . . . and with

What love ! . . . Ah ! that the path to real fame
Were opened to thee now ! . . . But we are doom'd
To drag out life in a corrupted age.
Submission is our glory ; and self-love
Our only virtue. What would'st thou effect ?
One man could not regenerate a people,
And coadjutors here thou wilt not find.

Ray. Hence I pine inwardly, and hence . . . am
silent.

Bi. Ah come, and let us elsewhere turn our
steps :

My brothers sometimes place their judgment-seat
In these apartments.

Ray. This is the retreat,
I know, in which to lying praise their ears
They open, and their bosoms close to pity.

Bi. Come then with me ; and mingle with the
poison
That subtly creeps through every throbbing vein,
Some soothing balsam. Thou hast not to-day
Embraced our children yet. Ah come, I pray thee :
And with their innocent and silent kisses
Let them, far better than I can with words,
Remind thee that thou art a father still.

Ray. Ah, could I, as to-day I recollect
The name of father, that of man forget !—
But, let us now depart.—Thou shalt have proof
Whether my children are beloved by me.—
Ah, thou know'st not, (and may'st thou never
know)

To what extremities his children drive
A real father ; how he may be goaded
To their destruction by o'erweening fondness.

ACT THE SECOND.

SCENE THE FIRST.

Julian, Lorenzo.

Lo. Brother, what boots it ? Thou hast hitherto Trusted to me : does it now seem to thee That, by my means, our influence is diminish'd ? Thou talkest of restraining men ? are these Restrain'd ? If such had met with tolerance, Say, had we risen to our present greatness ?

Ju. 'Tis true, Lorenzo, a benignant star Shines on us hitherto. We owe in part To fortune our advancement ; but still more To our forefather's lofty counsels owe it. Cosmo possess'd the state, but he possess'd it Under the semblance of a private man. Nor are the fetters yet so rivetted, That with the exterior of royalty We may securely grasp them. Let us leave To fools, who form the multitude, the vain Appearances of their lost liberty. In its commencement, arbitrary power, The less it is display'd, is more confirm'd.

Lo. We have not yet obtain'd the height of greatness :

We are summon'd by the present times, oh Julian, Rather to greatly dare, than nicely weigh. Cosmo already centred in himself His universal country ; and by all, As with one voice, was welcom'd as a father. Little or nothing to the complex scheme Pier our father added : adverse fate

Quickly cut short the few and feeble days
That he survived his sire : he added little ;
But meanwhile he to Cosmo next succeeding,
And we to Pier, something is obtain'd
In thus accustoming the citizens
To hereditary right. Our foes thenceforward
Have been each day dispersed, enfeebled, slain ;
Our friends accustomed or-constrained to obey ;
Now that all things invite us to complete
Cosmo's magnanimous enterprize, shall we
Be self-defeated by our cowardice ?

Ju. Wisely we ought to bring it to an end ;
But in a manner moderate and humane.
Where gentle measures may effect our ends
With cautious speed, inflexible, yet mild ;
And, when 'tis needful, sparingly severe.
Brother, believe me, to eradicate
Those seeds of liberty, by nature placed
In every human breast, no little art,
And management, besides a length of time,
Are requisite : these seeds may be suppress'd,
By spilling human blood, but not extinguish'd,
And oftentimes from blood they shoot again
With fresh luxuriance . . .

Lo. And do I wish
To shed the blood of these ? The axe in Rome
Was Scylla's instrument ; but e'en the rod
Is too imposing here : my words alone
Suffice to make them tremble.

Ju. Blind reliance !
Knowest thou not that none are to be fear'd
Like men enslaved ? Scylla dismiss'd his guards,
Yet hence was he not slain ; but girt with arms,

With satellites, and mercenary spies,
Nero, Domitian, and Caligula,
And thousand others that have ruled o'er slaves,
By their own minions butcher'd, fell ignobly.
Why irritate those who obey already?
Obtain thy end by other means. 'Tis true,
The people here were never wholly free;
But notwithstanding never slaves to one.—
Thou should'st benumb their minds; and utterly
Enervate their affections; each high thought
Subtly eradicate; abolish virtue,
Or wither it by making it a jest;
Install among thy creatures the most pliant;
Degrade, by honouring them, the falsely proud;
Declaim in lofty and imposing tones
Of clemency, of country, glory, laws,
And citizens; and more than aught besides
Affect equality with thy inferiors.—
Behold the mighty means, by which in each
Are changed by little and by little first
The feelings, then the customs, thence the laws;
Then the deportment of the ruler; last,
That which alone remains to change, his name.

Lo. Our ancestors with happy auspices
Already have adopted all these measures:
The foolish quarrels of the citizens,
If now a link is wanting to the chain,
Should fabricate that link. One, only one,
Openly dares, in short, to brave our power;
And ought he to be fear'd?

Ju. Ferocious son
Of disaffected father, Raymond gives
Just ground for apprehension...

Lo. Both should be,
(And for this project I address myself,)
Blasted by scorn : e'en a revenge like that
Would not be undelightful . . .

Ju. 'Tis not safe.

Lo. Great as the project is, my mind is fix'd.
I from his rank will take that turbulent youth ;
And suffer him to scatter at his will
Seditious words in vain : thus all shall see
How thoroughly I scorn his menaces.

Ju. A foe offended, and not slain ? At this,
What bosom, e'en though mail'd with triple steel,
Would tremble not ? Should'st thou make him a foe
Whom thou could'st extirpate ? Why thus give him,
Thyself, incautiously, so many pretexts
To agitate the state ? Why make him thus
The head, and leader of the malecontents ?
And they are numerous ; many, many more
Than thou suspectest. Open force they have not ?
I trust that it is so : but who will guard
Our back from treason ? Will suspicion, say,
Suffice for this ? It may suffice to spoil
Our quiet, not to give security.

Lo. Audacity will be our best defence :
Audacity to the enterprizing breast,
Which is both sword, and intellect, and shield.
A silent invitation I will give
To the rebellious and impetuous youth
To new offences. Afterwards disgraced,
But not destroy'd by him who might destroy him,
He to the multitude whom now he heads
Will thus become an object of derision.

SCENE THE SECOND.

Lorenzo, Julian, Guglielmo, Raymond.

Gu. Follow my footsteps, son ; and I beseech thee
Suffer me here to speak alone.—Oh you,
(For yet I know not by what epithet
I ought to accost you) in a suppliant posture
Behold me here your once implacable,
And bitterest enemy. Better I know,
Better adapted to my age infirm,
Were free expressions, and still freer deeds ;
Nor with my nature, though I use them, do
These servile ones accord. But I am not
The only one remaining of my house ;
Whence to your fortune, and to tyrannous
And base necessity, I long have yielded.
Myself, my life, my substance, and my honour,
My children, all did I confide to you ;
Nor was I more reluctant to obey
Than others were. Thence can I scarce believe
That which is now reported, that ye mean
With wrongs unmerited to injure Raymond,
And me in him. But grant, if this be true,
That I demand of you the cause for this.

Ju. Why from thy son dost thou not first demand
The cause of his deportment, and his language ? . . .

Ray. I refuse not to give account to him :
Nor can I ever meet with those, to whom
I would more freely, than to you, confess
My purposes . . .

Lo. Thy purposes I know.—
But I would teach thee, that, if thou would'st cope

With those in pow'r, there's need of enterprize
Proportion'd to thy envy ; and not less
Strength to that lofty enterprize proportion'd.¹
Say ; fares it so with thee ?

Gu. I hitherto

Am chief of all our race ; nor is there one
Who dares to move, if I precede him not.
I speak of deeds. And what, do ye likewise
Pretend to sit in judgment on secret thoughts ?
Are ineffectual words high treason here ?
Are we so far advanced ?—If ye pretend
To exercise a right like this, I ask you,
That men may learn more abjectly to fear,
What are you ? Whence your charter to such
power ?

Ray. What are they ? Dost thou ask it ? Do not
they

Tremendously, though tacitly, express it
In their imperious and cruel faces ?—
Yes, they are all ; and nothing we.

Ju. We are

The fearless guardians of the sacred laws ;
We are exterminating flames from heaven
To culprits like thyself ; but to the good
Heart-cheering benefactors.

Lo. In one word,

Such are we as to hold thee in contempt.
Our will to thee assign'd the gonfalon,
Another will of ours more just recalls it.
With dignity unmerited by us
Invested, didst thou ask on what pretence
The gonfalon was yielded to thy hands ?

Ray. Who knows it not ? Your terror gave it me ;

Your terror takes it from me : to yourselves
Terror is law supreme and deity.
What attribute of king possess you not ?
Already ye possess the public hate,
Their cruel artifice, their frantic vices,
Their infamous contrivances. Ye tread
The generous path trod by your ancestors :
Proceed, oh valiant, in full sail proceed,
While prosperous gales befriend you. Not wealth
only,
But life and honour ye will take away
From those who give you umbrage : the sublime,
And only right to your authority,
From waste of blood arises. Greatly dare :
And try to imitate the many tyrants
By whom oppress'd Italia has been scourged . . .

Gu. My son, thou dost exceed all bounds. 'Tis
true,
That it is lawful for each man to speak
His thoughts, while these have not thrown off the
name
Of citizens : but we . . .

Lo. Too late thou'rt cautious :
Thy time hast thou ill chosen to restrain him.
Fret not thyself ; his words are thy begetting.
Leave him to speak : on us depends to hear him.

Ju. Audacious youth, minds ill-disposed already,
What boots it to exasperate ? 'Twould be
The best for thee spontaneously to quit
The gonfalon, which in contempt of us
Thou wouldest keep in vain ; thou seest it . . .

Ray. Shall I thus make myself deserving insults ?
Hear me : these arts successfully perchance

May be adopted to ensure command,
But not to ensure obedience. If I yield,
I yield alone to force. Honour sometimes
Is by submission gain'd, if we indeed
Submit to nothing but to absolute,
And dire necessity.—It pleases me,
As I have told you mine, to have heard your thoughts.
Now new means to new violence I wait
To see, and be they what they may, I swear
That I will be of rising tyranny
The victim, yes, but not the instrument.

SCENE THE THIRD.

Lorenzo, Julian, Guglielmo.

Lo. Go ; if thou carest for thy son, pursue him :
To adapt his conduct better to the times
Instruct him ; and to this do thou thyself,
By thy example, aid him. Equally
With him indeed thou hatest us, yet thou
Hast yielded to us, and dost yield. Engraft
Thy own discretion on his headstrong will.
I do not e'en pretend regard for you ;
I'll have ye feign'd ; and nothing it annoys me.
Haste, but obey ; and yet obeying, tremble.
Go thou, and tell to this thy mountebank,
And pigmy Brutus, that his prototype,
The real Brutus, fell in vain with Rome.

Gu. I see my son's incautious. Yet I always
Applied to him a father's wise reproofs ;
I preach endurance, but he learns it not.
This is an art to which we've not been used :
Failings of youth are worthy of excuse ;

He will amend.—But thou, oh Julian, thou
Who art with honours and prosperity
Somewhat less drunken, mollify thy brother;
And make him recollect, that if a Brutus
Fail'd to regenerate Rome, yet many others
Were sacrificed ere Rome and Brutus fell.

SCENE THE FOURTH.

Lorenzo, Julian.

Ju. Heard'st thou how these address us ?

Lo. Yes, I hear.

They're garrulous, and thence I fear them less.

Ju. One may hatch plots . .

Lo. But few will follow him.

Ju. Raymond may be that one.

Lo. That he may be

That one, is what I hope. I fully know
His courage, his resources, and his force :
He may attempt, but he will ne'er succeed.
What can I wish for more ? I look to him,
Hoping that he our mandate may transgress.
Let him attempt it ; we at once shall thwart him.
Each hostile enterprize confirms our power,
And to our just revenge at once prepares
An ample field for action. In calm seas
Progress is difficult ; the earliest storm
Will drive our vessel to the wish'd-for port.

Ju. To wish for all at once, often at once
Causes the loss of all. All danger's doubtful ;
Nor he who fills the throne should e'er permit
Even the thought to cross his subjects' minds
That he's assailable by other men.

The opinion of the multitude, that holds
Our breasts invulnerable, is in itself
The very panoply that makes them so.
Woe if we leave the passage to our hearts
Once obvious to the point of traitrous swords!
A day will come when it will penetrate,
And find a passage to the very hilt.
To-day, oh brother, yield thyself to me;
No, our authority put not to proof,
Or their revenge. Ah, yield thyself to me.

Lo. To reason I am always wont to yield,
And this I hope to prove to thee.—But see,
Bianca comes to us o'erwhelm'd with grief:
How painful is it to my soul to hear
Her lamentations! . . yet I'm forced to hear them.

SCENE THE FIFTH.

Bianca, Lorenzo, Julian.

Bi. And is it true, oh brothers, 'tis your will
To shew yourselves to me oppressive lords,
Rather than brothers? Yet, if I to you
Was ever dear, I am your sister still;
And ye to Raymond gave me; ye who now
Are thus the first to insult him.

Lo. Art thou thus
Become, Bianca, hostile to thy blood,
That thou no more discernest equity?
Hast thou with Raymond learn'd so much to hate us,
That now our hearts are known to thee no longer?
All that we wish to do is to defeat
His malice by our measures. Gentle means,
Far gentler than he merits, we adopt,

To obviate further mischief: be convinced.

Bi. Dear are ye to me, brothers; he to me
Is also dear: I would do all for peace.
But why, if he already was your foe,
Give me to him in marriage? If ye gave
Me to him, why insult him afterwards?

Ju. We hoped that thou at least would'st be a
check
To his temerity . .

Lo. But hoped in vain:
For such is Raymond that 'twere easier far
To exterminate than change him.

Bi. But have you
Ever towards him the manners used, that change
A free, unconquer'd heart? If it grieves you
Not to be loved by him, who, save yourselves,
Prohibits his affection?

Lo. Oh, my sister,
How has the traitor utterly transfused
His poison in thy heart! He hath estranged
Thee, thee our sister, from all duteous thoughts;
Guess then how banefully his hostile words
Will operate elsewhere.

Bi. I might behold
With some complacency your sovereign power,
If one man I beheld, one, only one,
From your ferocious tyranny exempt;
And if that one were Raymond; he to whom,
By an indissoluble sacred tie,
Ye have united me; with whom I live
Inseparably join'd for many years,
With whom participate, with whom endure
A thousand injuries; to whom, alas!

Pledges of faith and of eternal love
(A wretched mother!) I have given already
Too numerous and too dear a progeny;—
Raymond, to whom I'm ready to yield all.

Ju. To take from him his office, is to wrest
The power of self-destruction from his hands,
Rather than that of injury to ourselves.
Indeed to be the first, it now becomes thee,
To induce him to renounce it . .

Bi. Ah! I see,
I manifestly see, by different means,
How to one end ye hasten. Of your views
I was the earliest victim; I was not
To real peace, but to delay'd revenge,
A sacrifice. Oh well ye understood
To assume at once the hearts and power of kings.
'Mid those resembling you, all natural ties
Are treated with derision . . Wretched me!
Why had I not discover'd this before?
Why knew it not before I was a mother?
But such I am; a mother and a wife . .

Lo. I cannot blame thy grief; . . but longer now
I cannot hear it.—Brother, let us go
Whither our duty summons us.—And thou,
Who deem'st us tyrants in thy heart, think not
Of that which he has lost, but rather think
Of that which, nothing meriting, he keeps.

SCENE THE SIXTH.

Bianca.

Bi. Thus sufferance to retain, kings deem a gift.—
With these my tears are vain: their hearts are mail'd

In adamant. Let me return once more
To unhappy Raymond : he at least beholds
My tears without contempt. Who knows ? Perchance
My griefs may thus be lighten'd . . Why perchance ?
Can there be doubt of this ? We should behold
Each father promptly for his children's sake
Resign his life, ere that a single prince
Would to the tears of all his fellow-men,
Much less then to a sister's tears, resign
The paltry prize of one fantastic wish.

ACT THE THIRD.

SCENE THE FIRST.

Raymond, Salviati.

Sal. Behold me here : this is the appointed day :
I come ; and bring with me whate'er I promised.
Already to the borders of Etruria
Warriors advance in arms : King Ferdinand
Pays them ; the Roman Sixtus blesses them ;
Ere they proceed, they wait to hear from us
The signal of attack. Now say, hast thou
All promised ammunition in these walls ?

Ray. My arm has long been ready for the blow ;
And I have store of others also ready ;
But whom to strike, or where, or how, or when,
They know not ; nor befits it that they know.
But to the great achievement yet is wanting
Its chiefest ornament : my aged father,
He who alone could authorize the attempt,
Is ignorant of it : to revengeful words
His ears are closed ; and thou wilt hear him speak

Of sufferance yet. My thoughts are known to him ;
For ill I hide them ; further he knows nothing :
I deem'd it wisest to conceal from him
This our confederacy till thou cam'st hither.

Sal. What say'st thou ? Nothing Guglielmo knows ?
And thinkest thou that, at the close of day,
He should be ignorant of what he's doom'd
To-morrow to accomplish ?

Ray. Thinkest thou
That it were wise to risk so great a secret ?
That to a man, (though enterprizing once,)
Infirm from years, 'twere wise to grant one night
To after-thoughts ? Beyond a few brief hours
Audacity dwells not in empty veins ;
Prudence comes soon ; irresolution thence,
Procrastination and inconstancy,
And the infecting others with alarm ;
And 'midst these doubts and fears the enterprize,
The time for its completion, and the rage
Ensuring its success, dissolve away,
And guilty shame at last o'erwhelms the whole.

Sal. But how, detests he not the dreadful yoke ?
And shares he not the general indignation ? . .

Ray. He hates it, but he fears more than he hates ;
And thence he vacillates eternally
'Twixt anger and dismay. Now he controuls
His wholesome indignation, and he prays
And waits for, and half hopes for, better times ;
And now, as by a fatal flash reveal'd,
The truth at once on his bewilder'd mind
Bursts forth ; and all the heaviness he feels
Of his unworthy chains, yet dares not burst them.
He was indeed incensed beyond all bounds

At the last outrage, which I would incur
At all events. The useless gonfalon
Let others gain, taken from me to-day.
I have, with many and repeated insults,
Myself compell'd the tyrants to resume
The honour they bestow'd. Yet not the less
For this have I indulged in loud complaints,
Affecting an immeasurable grief
For the invited injury.—Oh see
What times we live in, what abode is ours,
When with hypocrisy we're forced to clothe
E'en patriotic views!—By schemes like these
I have, at least in part, to my designs
Silently moulded Guglielmo's heart.
At length thou comest: thou shalt now divulge
The king's assistance, the pontific wrath,
The means concerted. Let us wait him here;
For here we are accustomed to confer.

Sal. Do not the tyrants oftentimes repair
To these apartments?

Ray. We are now secure
From their approach: already has this place
Witness'd their public and obnoxious toils.
The remnant of the day, which we consume,
We, the scorn'd multitude, in useless tears,
They spend in revels and in sensual joys.
Hence I invited thee to meet me here;
And hence my father also summon'd. He,
At first, will be amazed at seeing thee:
In a short time I will reveal to him
The indignation and the hardihood,
And the immutable and stern resolve
Of giving death, or dying, which we feel,

Mine be the task to inflame him. But, meanwhile,
Let him at once learn this confederacy
Both can be form'd, and is already form'd.

Sal. Thou dost admonish wisely: more and more
I deem thee, as I listen to thy words,
A worthy instrument of liberty.

As these are born oppressors, so art thou
Defender of thy country. To induce
Thy father to concur in our designs,
The sanction of the pope will much avail.
Those early principles on aged hearts
Have mighty influence, which e'en with our milk
We once imbibed. Rome, evermore believed
Implicitly by our forefathers, named
Each enterprize, injurious to herself,
Impious; and those, whatever they might be,
Holy, that aided her ambitious views.
If we are wise, this ancient prejudice
May now avail us much: since at this time,
Not as he's wont to be, the successor
Of Peter is the enemy of tyrants,
At this time, more than all allies beside,
That successor of Peter may befriend us.

Ray. It grieves me, I to thee alone confess it,
It grieves me not a little, thus to make
Vile means subservient to a generous end.
To raise as watchword in the cause of freedom,
The name of Rome, the abode of guilty slaves:
Here are the times, and not myself, in fault!
And further am I grieved, that I'm constrain'd
To make pretext of individual wrongs
In this most righteous cause. The multitude

Will think that I'm inflamed by low revenge
And selfish passions ; and perchance believe
That I am envious of the tyrant's power.—
Oh heaven, thou knowest . . .

Sal. Let not thoughts like these
Divert thee from thy purpose : speedily
The foolish vulgar will be undeceived
By our performances.

Ray. The time to come
Fills me with mournful and foreboding thoughts.
Their necks they have accustomed to the yoke ;
Their natural rights forgotten ; they know not
That they're in chains, much less desire to burst
them.

Slavery, the natures who resist it not,
Transforms, embrates ; and rather needs their force
To give them freedom than to clench their fetters.

Sal. Hence will the enterprize be more exalted,
And worthier of thyself. In Greece or Rome
'Twas meritorious, though not difficult,
To endow free souls with freedom. But to rouse
Dead and degraded slaves to life at once
And liberty, ah this indeed requires
Stern devotion.

Ray. It is true : yet fame
Awaits the mere attempt. Ah, were I sure
As of my own arm, and of my own heart,
Of those of my compatriots ! But by slaves
The tyrant, not the tyranny, is hated.

SCENE THE SECOND.

Guglielmo, Salviati, Raymond.

Gu. Thou, Salviati, here? I thought thou wert
Pursuing honours on the Tyber's banks.

Sal. A mightier object to my natal soil
Restores me.

Gu. Lucklessly dost thou review
A soil which it were better to forget.
To us what foolish purpose guides thee safe,
Far from the tyrants didst thou dwell, and thou
Returnest to thy prison. To the man
Doom'd to behold his native land enslaved
By cruel and by arbitrary power,
What unfrequented and what distant spot
(However savage and inhospitable,
Can be unwelcome? Let my son to thee
Be an example, if we ought to look
From these our Medicæan lords for aught
But outrages and scorn. In vain, in vain
Rome with the sacred ministry invests thee;
Their supreme will alone is here held sacred.

Ray. Father, and know'st thou whether he comes
here
Arm'd with endurance or a shield less vile?

Sal. Of bitter and retributory wrath
I come the austere minister: I come
Of plenary, inflexible revenge,
Though late, the certain messenger. I hope
To arouse ye all from the vile lethargy
In which ye all lie buried, abject slaves,
Now that with me and with my rage I bring

The holy rage of Sixtus, sovereign pontiff.

Gu. Arms wholly useless: rage we do not want;
We want support; endurance or support
Must be our choice or chance.

Sal. Support we bring,
And more effectual than was ever proffer'd.
I bring not words alone. Hear; for to me,
In brief yet powerful language, it belongs
The business to divulge. There are, by whom
I am commission'd to recall to thee,
Provided thou canst yet remember them,
The ancient times, and thy original pride.
If not, the painful duty then is mine
The degradation of thyself and others
To bring before thine eyes. If in thy veins
There yet is blood left to revolt at this,
Assistance is not far from us. Already
The Roman banners in the Etrurian ports
Wave to the wind; and far more firm support
The standard of King Ferdinand affords,
Follow'd by thousand swords in firm array,
Impatient for the fight, at one slight nod
Of thine for any enterprize prepared.
In thy arbitrement is placed the life
Of the oppressors; thine and thy son's honour;
The freedom of us all. That which thy sword
May yet obtain, that which thou yet may'st lose
From cowardice, thy doubts, thy hopes, thy fears,
Our loss and our disgrace maturely weigh,
And finally resolve.

Gu. What do I hear?
To thee can I yield credence? Who obtain'd
So much for our advantage? Hitherto

Profuse alone in empty promises
Sixtus and Ferdinand were tardy friends.
Who now impels them, who? . .

Ray. Dost thou ask that?

Hast thou so soon forgotten then that I
Repair'd to Naples and the Tyber's banks?
That there twelve months I tarried? To what clime
Can I transport myself, and not inspire,
Where'er I go, resentment and abhorrence?
Among what people can I drag my days,
Into whose bosoms I shall not transfuse
All, all my indignation, and at once
Excite in them compassion for myself
And for my friends? Who now remains
Deaf to my lamentations?—For our shame
Thou art alone so, father; where thou oughtest,
More than all others, to abhor the yoke,
And feel its weight: thou, whom I call my father,
Art equally with me the tyrants' foe;
And art by them, e'en more than I am, scorn'd.
Thou, once the best among good citizens,
For thy too facile criminal endurance
Art now among the guilty ones the worst.
Ah, make, with thy infirm refusal, make
Our fetters and thy infamy eternal!
All now perceive that we are fit to serve,
But not to live: yes, wait, wait on for time,
Till time is ours no more: those hoary locks
For fresh disgraces keep; and palliate
With false compassion for thy son, which he
With all his heart abhors and disavows,
Thy ignominious cowardice.

Gu. My son,

For such indeed thou art, no less than thou,
Fervid with youth and generous vehemence,
I once thus thunder'd; but that time is past;
E'en now I am not vile, nor deem'st thou so
Who thus aspersest me; but I have ceased
To act by chance.

Ray. Thou art resign'd to live
Each day by chance, and wilt not act by chance?
What art thou? What are we? Would not the hope,
The most precarious, of revenge, now be
A state more certain than the doubtful one,
The apprehensive one, in which we're doom'd,
Trembling, to live?

Gu. Thou know'st that for myself
I tremble not.

Ray. Then would'st thou say for me,
I absolve thee from all paternal care
On my account. We both are citizens,
And nothing else to-day; and there remains
Far more for me than for thyself to lose.
To the meridian of my days have I
Scarcely attain'd; and thou towards night declinest.
Children thou hast; like thee I am a father;
I have an offspring but too numerous,
And of that helpless age that they are fit
Only to wake compassion in my heart.—
Different, far different, are my ties from thine.
I see a lovely consort, of myself
The better part, eternally in tears
Beside me pining: when they see her weep,
My children flock around, and ask her why;
And they too weep with her. Their sorrows rend
My heart; and I'm constrain'd to weep by stealth.

But soon the sad remembrance disenchant's
Each soft affection of my wither'd heart,
That 'tis not fitting for a slave to love
Objects not his. My consort is not mine,
My children are not mine, while I permit
Him, whosoe'er he be, that is a tyrant,
In this place to inhale the vital air.
I have no tie now left in all the world
Except the stern inexorable oath,
Tyrants and tyranny to extirpate.

Gu. Would'st thou slay two of them : to willing
slaves

Will tyrants e'er be wanting ?

Ray. To the free

Will swords be wanting ? Let them rise by thousands,
By thousands they shall fall, or I will fall.

Gu. I am subdued by thy decisive will.

I, not unworthy of a son like thee,
Would to thy noble rage commit myself,
If of our arms, and not of foreign powers,
Thou would'st avail thyself. I see not, no,
For our sakes, Rome and Ferdinand in arms ;
But for the injury of the Medici.

We place them in these walls ourselves, but who
At will can chace them afterwards from thence ?

The mercenary soldiers of a king
Seem not to me the harbingers of freedom.

Sal. I thus reply to thee. The faith of Rome,
The faith of Ferdinand I warrant not :

It is the accustomed plan of those who reign
Alternately to give it or resume it.

In the suspicion common to them both,
Their mutual envy, and in what is call'd
State policy, do thou to-day confide.

Both fain would domineer o'er us ; but one
Prevents the other. Pity for our state
Their heart conceives not ; nor have I alleged it :
But long experience, to our shame, persuades them
That popular and fluctuating rule,
The turbulence of faction, render us
Slow to resolve, irresolute in act.
Each of them fears that, on the Tuscan ruins,
A single Tuscan chieftain should arise,
Who may suffice to annihilate the one,
If with the other leagued. Behold at once
The royal knot untwisted : private ends
Prompt both alliances. If otherwise,
Think'st thou that I should ever dare to urge
Reliance on the friendship of a king ?

Ray. And were it otherwise, dost thou believe
That I should inconsiderately relax
The reins, that I, with persevering hand,
O'er the reboundings of my struggling will,
Have held so many years ? I utter'd not
By accident inflammatory words
To thee ; by accident thou didst not hear me
Exasperate with pungent virulence
The tyrant's rage against me. Long I spake not,
While silence might assist me ; but the proud,
Imprudent tauntings that have madden'd them
To injure me, by prudence were inspired.
To my vile fellow-slaves I had in vain
Our general wrongs adduced ; for private ones
Alone establish in corrupted minds
Right to retaliation. I could find
Abettors of my vengeance, if alone
I of myself discoursed ; but not one man
Could I e'er find discoursing of my country.

Hence (ah opprobrious and cruel silence,
But indispensable!) I never dared
To name my country, never. But to thee,
Who art not of the common herd of men,
Can I refrain from naming her? Ah no!—
The object of our enterprize consists
In slaying the two tyrants: but 'twill be
Of far more difficult accomplishment
To fashion after consequences well;
To give to inanition life once more;
To re-create our prostrate commonwealth,
To make it once more strong, and capable
Of liberty; to make its pulses beat,
Now languishing, with vigorous, virtuous health.
Now, say'st thou not that we're confederate
To a most holy purpose? I alone
Am leader of this lofty brotherhood;
He is but one, as thou may'st also be,
Of its component parts. We have, thou seest,
Great instruments; and courage greater still:
Sublime the end, and worthy of ourselves.
Thou, father, from a project great as this,
Wilt thou shrink back dishearten'd? Thy consent
Grant me, oh grant me; nothing else is wanting.
The swords unscabbarded are raised already:
Give, give the signal only, and thou seest them
In their devoted bosoms plunged at once,
And make an ample space for liberty.

Gu. Thou hast a hero's mind.—A noble shame,
Astonishment, resentment, hope, and rage,
All hast thou raised in me. Sense of old age,
Courage of manhood, and the fire of youth,
What hast thou not? My guide and my commander,

My deity art thou.—It shall be thine
Alone, the honour of this enterprize ;
With thee its dangers I will only share !
'Thou say'st, that nought is wanting but my name
To accomplish it. Henceforward to thy will
That name, and all its influence, I yield :
Dispose, elect, and whomsoe'er thou wilt
Rescind from our confederates. Keep alone
A weapon for thy father : thou shalt teach me
What post I should fill up, what blow inflict,
'The whole shall teach me, when the whole is ready :
In thee and thy judicious rage I trust.

Ray. But . . . more than thou may'st think . . . that
time draws near.

Thou wilt not be inconstant ?

Gu. I am *thy* father :

Dost *thou* expect to change ?

Ray. Then whet thy blade,

For at the dawn of day . . . But who approaches ?

Bianca ! . . . Oh my friend, let us avoid her.

'The last directions to this mighty work

Haste we to give. To thee I shall return,

Father, ere long, and then thou shalt know all.

SCENE THE THIRD.

Guglielmo, Bianca.

Bi. I seek for Raymond, and he flies from me.

Oh tell me wherefore, and with whom he flies !—

What do I see ? 'Thou seem'st bereft of reason !

What troublous thoughts estrange thee from thyself ?

Ah, speak : does any danger threaten us ? . . .

O'er whom does it impend ? . . .

Gu. If agony
Heavily sits upon my pallid face,
Why should'st thou be surprised at this? I fear,
And cannot hide my fears; and who fears not?
If thou look round, a pallidness like mine
On every face is painted.

Bi. But for fear
What fresh occasion? . . .

Gu. 'Tis not fresh, oh daughter.

Bi. But I have always seen thee hitherto
Immoveable: thou fearest now, and say'st it.
And Raymond, who like an impetuous storm
Of violent discordant impulses
Seem'd hitherto to me, I now behold
Assume the semblance of a tranquil man.
Not long ago, words breathing nought but peace
He spake to me: and he, of all suspense
The instinctive enemy, professes now
To expect alleviation from delay:
With one unknown he flies from me; and thou
Stay'st agitated here. . . . Ah yes, there is
Too certainly a secret; . . . and thou hid'st it,
From me thou hidest it? My sire, my spouse,
Vie in deluding me. May heaven permit . . .

Gu. Check these suspicions, check these tears: in
vain
Should I, alarm'd, exhort thee not to fear.
Fear thou, but fear not us.—Well said my son,
That time alone can bring us palliatives.
Go to thy children: thou canst not perform
A task more grateful to us than to guard them,
To love them well, and nourish them to virtue.—
Useful advice, if thou from me regard it,

'Twill be to thee, that thou should'st persevere,
Where words avail not, in profoundest silence . . .
Thus, oh Bianca, thou wilt surely win
All our affections ; and at once escape
The persecution of thy cruel brothers.

ACT THE FOURTH.

SCENE THE FIRST.

Julian, and an armed Follower.

Ju. Ho ; here bring Guglielmo instantly.

SCENE THE SECOND.

Julian.

Ju. Does Salviati then return to Florence ?
Why should he stir from Rome ? How dares he plant
His footsteps in these thresholds ? Does he thus
Despise our hatred, and our power, and us ?—
But yet, if he returns, his hardihood
Springs certainly from force, . . from borrow'd force.—
Yes, now 'tis indispensable to use
All stratagems to frustrate those results,
Which, having once befall'n, we should in vain
For reparation strive. Be Guglielmo
First summon'd to our presence ; haply he,
Exhausted by the infirmities of age,
May by the bait of flattery be surprized
To indiscreet confession. To these traitors
Since Salviati now has join'd himself,
The messenger of papal subtlety,
All circumspective vigilance is needful ;
And with profuse professions we must seek

A reinforcement of preventive measures,
And time to adapt them to the exigence.

SCENE THE THIRD.

Guglielmo, Julian.

Ju. Oh, Guglielmo, thou who dost possess,
More than all other men, the precious fruit
Of a long life, and a long life well spent,
Experience and wisdom; who dost know,
Dost understand, and canst discriminate
The modern and the antiquated rights
Of this our country; listen to my words.
Already, by the power which now is mine,
I am not blinded, nor have I consign'd
To iniquitous forgetfulness the name
Of citizen; I know full well how brief,
And how unstable are the gifts of fortune.
I know . . .

Gu. What thou may'st be who knows? 'Tis true,
Thou dost appear more lenient than thy brother;
But so corrupted is the vulgar mind,
That though it fears thee less, it does not thence
Detest thee less than he. Perchance a tyrant,
Who forces to obey a race enslaved,
Is more acceptable than one who stoops
To dupe them to obedience.

Ju. I confess
Lorenzo oft is culpably incautious;
Nor is thy Raymond so invincible
As he believes himself. Let us confer,
Soften'd by more conciliatory thoughts.—
Thou knowest that the citizens, inform'd

And apprehensive of the ancient licence,
Committed to our trust the superflux
Of liberty; from whence the nobler parts
Have since remain'd eternally untouch'd . . .

Gu. How hast thou a plain argument perplex'd
With subtle phrases destitute of sense!
There is a simple name for servitude.
Call those who yield to despots slaves at once.

Ju. And to thy freedom give the name of licence.
I came not for these flimsy arguments.

Gu. 'Tis true, that folly only fights in words.

Ju. Then listen to me ere I illustrate
This truth with deeds. A fervid virulence
Consumes thy Raymond's heart: with youth and
power

Lorenzo also feels life's pulse beat high.
To thee, thy son, and to thy entire race,
May ruin thence result: but also thence
Our ruin may result by treacherous means.
I speak not of Lorenzo as a brother;
Nor speak thou as a father of thy son.
We're citizens, and thou the best. Now say,
Should we not strenuously exert ourselves
To hinder tumults, bloodshed, and disgrace?
And thou the more so now, as thou art placed
In most alarming danger? Thou who dar'st
Call servitude, th' observance of the laws,
Perceivest, that amid new broils, to you
The load will rather be increased than lessen'd.
Be thou at once a citizen and father:
Make thy son somewhat yield: if he alone
Confess that he is less than we, with this
Lorenzo will be pacified. It is

Allotted to thee with one word of thine
To frustrate each pernicious consequence.

Gu. Who could make Raymond yield? And should
I do it,
E'en if I could?

Ju. At once confess to me :
If thou wert sovereign here, and thou didst see
Thy power condemn'd by us, as ours is now
By him, what punishment wouldst thou inflict?

Gu. I should esteem that I in ruling here
So much more grievously insulted others,
That of each insult offered to myself
I should take no account. Of liberty,
What less part can be left to those who lose it
Than to lament its loss? Each man should speak,
Were I in your place, as his judgment dictates ;
But act alone conformable to mine.

Silent, alone are formidable, foes :
And scatter'd poison injures not its object.
Frankly I speak to thee : I do not deem
My son for lofty enterprises fit :
Ah, were he so! Thou would'st not hear me thus
Address thee abjectly ; nor hadst thou seen
Me tremble and obey.—'Gainst foes like us,
Contempt, when managed with dexterity,
('Tis but too true) is adequate defence.
Behold, it seems to me, that, though no tyrant,
I can prescribe to thee, with decent skill,
The laws of tyranny, the stratagems,
The conduct, and the principles sublime.

Ju. What would'st thou say to me? And know I
not,
As well as thou dost know, this son of thine?

Gu. And dost thou fear him?

Ju. Fear'd, I fear again —

To simulate, or to dissimulate,
Were idle now. Let us for once renounce
In words, what always we renounce in deeds,
Maxims fallacious as they're plausible :
Not from our country, not from laws, or freedom,
But from self-love, and self-utility,
And apprehensions of contingent loss,
Let each of us, with more sincerity,
And with more wisdom, take his rule of conduct.
Lorenzo all the qualities possesses,
By which a new state is increased and sway'd,
Except forbearance and timidity :
Nature hath form'd me in another mould ;
And that which is deficient in himself
In me is perhaps excessive : but confess,
Art thou not e'en more timorous than I ?
Do not I see the spirit of mistrust,
And apprehension, in thy smallest actions ?
I know, no base of some eternal rock
Is in the restless main more firmly placed,
Than Raymond and Lorenzo stand unmoved
In their resolves : in nature they are equal,
Yet not in power : but equal is *our* fear.
As with my brother I exert myself,
Do thou exert thyself with this thy son.
Perhaps we may yet see other times. Few years
Hast thou to live ; yet these thou would'st desire,
Though burthensome and comfortless, to spend :
Thou hast supported such . . . Would'st thou pre-
serve them ?

Gu. The terror of a tyrant, and a father,

No one would place in counteracting scales
Save he who is a tyrant and a father.
I feel my own alarm ; thine, thou alone
Canst feel and estimate. Paternal fear,
Which is the most excusable, to-day
Surmounts the other. Far as I avail
I will exert myself, that Raymond chuse
Spontaneous exile ; and 'twere best he did so ;
For not for vengeance, but for fresh injustice,
In these abhorred walls will he remain.

SCENE THE FOURTH.

Lorenzo, Julian, Guglielmo.

Lo. Julian, what dost thou ? Dost thou spend in
words

The time that others spend in deeds ? . . .

Ju. At last

This old man yields to my persuasive speech.
Dost spurn at peace before I've made it sure ?

Lo. Who talks of peace ? Lo, Salviati comes,
The source of all disturbance, the contriver
Of every guilty, circumventive plot.

Ju. I know it ; but meanwhile . . .

Lo. And dost thou know,
That from the south he brings arm'd warriors here ?
In truth no martial race : to whom we ought
To shew ourselves, and only shew ourselves.
At the first lightening of our shields, at once
Their fenny cloud will be dispersed. Indeed,
What courage founded not in others fears,
Was e'er display'd by Rome ?

Gu. And what, my lord ?

Can one defenceless citizen's return
 From Tyber's banks excite suspicion in thee?
 And to your detriment would Rome now arm,
 Who so infrequently and clumsily
 Combats, and only in her own defence?

Lo. More than one hero hath been made to
 tremble

Before the pope's perfidious myrmidons.
 'Mid roses, and 'mid lilies, they conceal
 Daggers and poison. It is true, their arms
 Would, if foreseen, be always impotent.—
 Ye satellites of Rome, I leave you here:
 Plot ye till I return. My brother, come;
 Let us depart. We will afterwards
 With these resume our conference: but first
 Let those pale quivering banners that display
 The surreptitious keys, seized or dispersed,
 Or burn'd, or trampled in the squalid filth,
 Fall by our hands. We should first somewhat shake
 The putrid aged trunk on which fraud leans;
 Since it belongs to ages more remote
 To eradicate it wholly.—Let us go.—
 With joys my heart leaps up in thrusting thee
 Against an open enemy, oh sword!
 And only I regret, if thou disdain
 To smite the back of hostile fugitives,
 That thou must here return fasting from blood.

SCENE THE FIFTH.

Guglielmo.

Gu. He has a lofty soul; a soul too great
 For tyranny. He doubtlessly will reign,

Except he fall a victim to our swords.
But reign, reign at thy pleasure ; thou shalt be
Quickly resembling thy perfidious brother ;
Crafty, flagitious, apprehensive, cruel ;
In short, what ought to be, and is, who reigns.
Now light already thickens, and my son
Comes not to me ; nor Salviati comes.
But of the Roman troops not yet in march
How could Lorenzo hear ? This enterprise
Which we project is hard to execute ;
And doubtful its success. But yet the rage,
The vengeance, temper'd with sagacity,
Of Raymond, reassure me.—Let me seek him . . .

SCENE THE SIXTH.

Raymond, Salviati, Guglielmo.

Gu. Oh ! tell me in what posture are our hopes ?

Ray. Almost completed.

Sal. Heaven, at length, smiles on us :

My hopes are more than realized.

Gu. Far more

Than I was heretofore, ye find me ready,

And for an ample vengeance. Insolence !

Here Julian took upon himself erewhile

To covenant with me for our disgrace ;

And afterwards Lorenzo joined his brother,

Threat'ning and arrogant. I spake to him

Now doubtful words, indignant now, now feign'd ;

For the most part in servile tones disguised,

To tyrants so acceptable : they deem

No crime so dire as that of fearlessness.

I would not rouse suspicion in their souls ;

They think me full of fear—But tell me how
The secret of the foreign armament
Hath thus in part transpired? Lorenzo seems,
'Tis true, to view it with consummate scorn,
And to account it th' ineffectual fruit
Of home-bred intrigues foster'd by ourselves.
Such confidence assists us; and though Julian
Hath intimated that he apprehends
Domestic discontents, he fancies not
The vengeance so inevitably near,
Or so alarming as it is. Ah say,
Is our success then certain? What assailant,
What arms, what means, where, when? . . .

Ray. Hear thou the whole.

Meanwhile with wonder be not stupified
At what Lorenzo knows We artfully,
Their forces to divert, at first proclaim'd
The foe's approach. But in the vulgar ear
The arms of Rome exclusively resound.
“The holy Sixtus sends a little aid
“To rescue from their recent servitude
“The oppress'd Tuscan.”—The report behold,
In consequence of which I hoped, the tyrants
A scanty, but an open force expecting,
Would turn towards this alone their anxious thoughts;
And rightly I conjectured. To the camp,
At dawn of day, Lorenzo hastes to go;
But too inevitably will arise
That dawn for him, destined to be his last.
Both shall be slain to-morrow. I have chosen
A few, but stubborn both in hand and heart,
For the great enterprise. Anselmo, Albert,
Napoleon, and Bandini, and thy son.

Rinato vile, dishonouring our race,
Refused to be one of this noble band.

Gu. Coward ! and should he now betray us ? . . .

Ray. Oh,

Could he imagine that ! but, free from vice,
He has no virtue : speak of him no more.—
Ready for every signal, Anselm' keeps
His armed men ; but wherefore they know not :
We shall commence th' attack at the same time
That he shall occupy the greater forum,
The palace ; and the many avenues
Thitherward tending ; thence the populace
Invite to freedom : we meanwhile shall join them . . .

Gu. But in one place t'inflict on them one death
Do you expect ? Woe, if an interval,
E'en of one moment, 'twixt the blows elapse !

Ray. Ere from these walls they issue to the camp,
At dawn of day, both to the church will go
T' implore Heaven's aid to their tyrannic arms :
There shall they both be slain.

Gu. What do I hear ?
In the house of God ?

Sal. Yes, in the house of God.
What victim can we offer to the skies
More welcome than an immolated tyrant ?
Hath he not set th' example to defy
Men, laws, and nature, and high Heaven itself ?

Gu. Thou speakest truly ; yet with human blood
To desecrate the altars . . .

Sai. Human blood,
The blood of tyrants ? They on human blood
Who feed ? And for such monsters shall there be
A sacred refuge ? Turpitude be safe

There, where eternal justice has its throne?
Were they both wreathed around their Maker's
image,
For this I would not sheathe my lifted sword.

Gu. The people, who behold with other eyes
Actions like these, with thundering voice will call us
Irreverent, sacrilegious homicides.
This universal prejudice alone
Our enterprise may thwart, or wrest from us
All its advantages . . .

Ray. On th' other hand
This interval alone can serve our purpose :
There is no superfluity of time :
To-morrow they are sacrificed, or never.
That which is needful is t' ensure the blows ;
Nor any place adapted to ensure them
Is there like this.—Considerest thou the people ?
More than with anger, with astonishment
All innovation they are apt to view.
We will give orders, that, at the same moment
In which we draw our swords, the sacred roof
Shall echo with the anathemas of Rome.

Gu. 'Tis true, the name of Rome may do much
here.

But which of us the honour shall obtain
Of the first blow ? What post shall I fill up ?
Wrath, impulse, courage, here alone suffice not.
Rather a will extravagantly warm
May injure here.—A cold ferocious valour,
A prompt and steady hand, a face unmoved,
A heart whose element is human blood,
A mute inflexibility of lip,
Men should have these who are tyrannicides.

A motion, nod, or look inopportune,
 Nay, e'en a thought, may break the fatal charm,
 The destined victim's confidence may thwart,
 Time for the deed, the perpetrator's courage.

Ray. We have ourselves arranged the first attack :
 The first blow shall be mine : to quench their thirst
 Then the less resolute shall venture forth,
 Soon as the dastard tyrants on the earth,
 Weltering in blood, praying for life, shall fall.
 Father, the signal heard, if thou repair
 Where stands Anselmo, thou wilt aid us much,
 Far more than in the temple ; from whose shelter,
 Soon as the blow is hurl'd, we shall rush forth.
 I grieve that I alone cannot at once
 Both of them murder.—Oh ! what saidst thou, father ?
 A prompt and steady hand ? This very steel
 Shall sooner fail than my right-hand and heart.

Gu. Why emulating thee can I not strike ?
 'Tis true, too true, alas ! that, weak with age,
 My tremulous limbs to my untrembling heart
 May give the lie. Thou art a light from Heaven
 To dissipate my doubts : thou hast thought well :
 For all hast well provided ; and in vain
 I speak. It pleases me that the first blows
 Ye have awarded to yourselves alone.
 How much I envy you ! I only fear'd
 Thou would'st refuse, with victims so impure,
 To stain thy sacerdotal hand . . .

Sal. How ill
 Thou knowest me ! Behold my dagger ; see it ;
 'Tis no less sacred than the hand that grasps it :
 The holy Sixtus having bless'd it first,
 To me consign'd it. Interchangeably

The same hand grasp'd the crosier and the sword :
T' extinguish tyrants, and their impious slaves,
The mighty God of battle arm'd himself,
The right-hand never fallible, and dire,
Of his anointed priests. These arms I grasp,
These consecrated, homicidal arms,
Shall hang one day an offering on these altars.
A fury more than human hath inflamed me :
And though I bring an arm unused to blood,
'That heaven-descended fury, to the heart
Which I have chosen to pierce, shall guide my hand.

Gu. And hast thou chosen then ? ...

Sal. Lorenzo.

Gu. Ah !

The most ferocious ?

Ray. Though I had preferr'd
To slay the strongest, yet have I agreed
In this t' indulge him. Furthermore, I thought
That most assuredly the abject Julian
Would fence his cowardice in hidden mail ;
Whence, as the enterprise most difficult,
Him I accepted. Thou shalt have Lorenzo ;
The guilty Julian is my destined prey :
E'en now I grasp him : now within that breast,
Receptacle of treachery and fraud,
The sword I plunge up to the very hilt.
The signal to unsheathe, and to assault,
Will be the sacred moment, when, by hymns
Chaunted in whispers, from his high abode
The son of God mysteriously drawn down,
Enters the consecrated element.—
Now thou know'st all : as soon as thou shalt hear
The tolling of the saintly bell, rush forth ;

And then remember, that our enterprise
Has been defeated, or is perfected.

Gu. I will do all.—Let us now separate :—
Oh Night, thou last of slavery or life,
Hasten thy flagging and invidious course !—
Do thou meanwhile inflexibly, oh son,
Distrust Bianca : love doth often make
A woman's heart consummate in discernment.
And thou, oh Salviati, recollect,
That if thy first blow should be found abortive,
Lorenzo is not one to give thee time,
Or opportunity, to aim a second.

ACT THE FIFTH.

SCENE THE FIRST.

Raymond, Bianca.

Ray. What would'st thou now? retire to thy
apartments :

Leave me ; I shall return here instantly.

Bi. And may I not go with thee ?

Ray. No.

Bi. Ah, why ? . . .

Ray. Thou canst not.

Bi. Dost thou disregard me thus ?

Oh dear departed days, where are ye gone ?

Then from thy side thou didst not banish me ;

Nor didst thou ever move but I moved with thee,

Blessing thy never solitary steps !

Wherefore do I displease thee ? and in what

Have I offended thee ? Thou fliest from me ;

And, what is worse, thou drivest me from thy presence.

Ah, then, the sound of this my once-loved voice,
No longer reaches, much less penetrates,
Thy alienated heart ! I will pursue thee,
If only at a distance . . .

Ray. But what fear'st thou ?

Or what dost thou suspect ? . . .

Bi. Thou know'st.

Ray. I know

That thou lov'st me, that thee I also love ;
Love thee far more than thou canst comprehend.
My lips divulge it not ; but every gesture,
My looks, my countenance, my heart declare it.
Now, if I chase thee from me, or avoid thee,
I do it, since I wish to afflict thee less
With my calamities ; . . . what solace, say,
Canst thou give me ?

Bi. Cannot I weep with thee ?

Ray. To see thee waste away thy life in tears,
In useless tears, redoubles my affliction.
I fly from all society thou seest ;
And to myself am burthensome.

Bi. I see

Far more than this ; too certainly I see
That thou mistrustest me.

Ray. I tell thee not

All my misfortunes ? . . .

Bi. Thy misfortunes, yes ;

But not their remedies. With some great scheme
Thy heart is labouring : and thou deemest not
That thou should'st tell it me ? Conceal it then.

I ask of thee alone to follow thee ;
And thou refuseth it ? I may, perchance,
A little help, but never injure thee.

Ray. What say'st thou ? . . . Nothing in my heart
I hide . . .

Except my rage, as useless as 'tis ancient.

Bi. But yet this long uninterrupted night,
Which scarcely yet the rising dawn disperses,
How different, ah, how very different,
Was it to thee from all preceding nights !
Not one brief moment did calm sleep descend
Upon thy weary eyes. Thou closed'st them
To deceive me the better ; but the thick,
And frequent pantings of thy breast ; thy sighs
Suppress'd by force ; thy face alternately
Inflamed with fire, or bathed in hues of death ; . . .
All I observed, yes, all ; for love watch'd with me :
I'm not deceived : in vain thou would'st conceal . . .

Ray. And vainly dost thou rave.—Above my head,
'Tis true, that genial and profound repose
Spread not its wings ; but this oft happens to me.
And who the blessedness of sleep enjoys
Where tyrants dwell ? Eternally on high,
Above the head of slaves, a naked sword
Hangs by a slender thread. Save idiots, here
No other men repose.

Bi. What wilt thou say
Of thy so sudden starting from thy pillow ?
Is this thy wonted hour ? The shades of night
Were undiminish'd yet, when thou already
Hadst leap'd abruptly from thy bed, like one
Whom unaccustom'd care consumes. Towards me
Did not I see thee afterwards direct,

Sighing, thy humid eyes? and scarcely risen,
Thy children one by one embrace? embrace!
Nay, rather to thy breast a thousand times
Glue them, devouring them with eager kisses;
Convulsed with agony, did not I see thee,
With copious torrent of paternal tears,
Their little breasts and faces inundate?
Thou erewhile so ferocious? Thou, a man
Whose eyes are never visited by tears?
Shall I see these things, and not apprehend
That something vast and ominous lies hid
In the recesses of thy labouring heart?

Ray. . . . I wept?

Bi. And thou deniest it?

Ray. I wept? . . .

Bi. With undropt tears thine eyes are humid still.
If in this breast thou shedd'st them not, ah where? . .

Ray. Feel, feel, these eyes are dry; . . . no tears
are there . . .

And if erewhile I wept . . . I wept the fate
Of the poor children of an outraged father.
Must I incessantly not weep their birth,
And their existence? Wretched little ones!
What fate in this long death, which we call life,
Awaits you! To increase your infamy,
Ye are at once the tyrants' slaves and nephews . . .
I ne'er embrace you but I weep for this . . .
These pledges of our love, let them be dear
To thee, oh consort; since I, with a love,
Love them too different from thy love; and now
Too different from these corrupted times.
Yet, notwithstanding, weep their destiny; . . .
And, to their father, take especial heed

They be not like, if it can comfort thee
Rather to bring them up to servitude,
Than to the practice or the love of virtue.

Bi. Oh Heaven! . . . what words! . . . my sons! . . .
alas! . . . In danger?

Ray. If peril rises, I confide them to thee.
Do thou withdraw them from the tyrants' rage
Should it be ever needful.

Bi. Woe is me!
Now I perceive, I understand, and now
Am certain. Art thou come, oh fatal day?
Now is the mighty enterprise mature:
Thou wouldest change the state.

Ray. . . . And if I would,
Have I sufficient strength for such a deed?
I would perchance accomplish it; but oh,
These are the visions of a maniac . . .

Bi. Ah! ill thou feignest: those beloved lips
Are not accusom'd to deceive thy consort.
That thou dost undertake a mighty task
My terror tells me; and those various,
Tremendous workings of thy countenance,
That in a crowd in quick succession throng,
Despairing agony, compassion, rage,
Hatred, revenge, and love Ah, by those children,
Which thou, spite of thyself, dost so much love;
Not by myself, oh no! for I am nothing;
And by thy eldest child, our growing hope,
Our mutual precious hope, I do conjure thee,
At least, in part, reveal to me thy thoughts!
Only convince me thou'rt exempt from danger,
And I am pacified: if 'tis not so,

Suffer me at thy side. Ah ! how ought I
To save thy children, if I do not know
What peril threatens them ? I fall, I fall,
Prostrate before thee : I will never rise
Till thou dost speak. If thou mistrustest me,
Slay me at once ; if, on the other hand,
Thou dost confide in me, why art thou silent ?
I am thy wife, and nothing else : ah speak.

Ray. . . . Lady, . . . oh rise ! Thy terror represents
Dangers to thy affrighted phantasy,
At present far removed. Arise, return ;
Continue with thy children : I to them
Will also come ere long : leave me.

Bi. Ah no ! . . .

Ray. Leave me ; 'tis my command.

Bi. Abandon thee ?

Ah ! rather kill me : by no other means
Shall this fond grasp be loosen'd . . .

Ray. Cease.

Bi. Oh Heaven !

Ray. Desist ; or I . . .

Bi. I will pursue thy steps.

Ray. Ah wretched me ! Behold my father here !
Behold my father.

SCENE THE SECOND.

Guglielmo, Raymond, Bianca.

Gu. What dost thou do here ?
There are who now expect thee at the temple ;
And meanwhile idle here ? . . .

Ray. Heard'st thou ? I go ;

What dost thou fear? Ah stay; detain her, father:
I fly . . . and soon return.—To thee, Bianca,
I recommend my children, if thou lovest me.

SCENE THE THIRD.

Guglielmo, Bianca.

Bi. What words! Ah wretched me! to death he
flies!

And thou forbiddest me to follow him!

Cruel . . .

Gu. Stay, stay; be pacified; ere long
He will return.

Bi. Cruel! dost thou thus feel
Compassion for thy son? Thou leavest him
Alone to encounter death, and thou'rt a father!
If thus thou canst, abandon him; but ah!
Stop not my steps: loose me, I will go to him . . .

Gu. Thy going now would be mistimed and late.

Bi. Late! Ah! it is then true that he attempts . .
Ah! tell me . . . Speak, or let me go. . . . Where flies
he? . . .

To some most dangerous enterprize I know;
But ought I not to hear of what belongs
To such a precious portion of myself?
Do you indeed more than myself remember
The blood from which I spring? Ah, speak! I am
Now fashion'd of your blood: I do not hate
My brothers, no; but I love only Raymond.
I love him much as human heart can love;
And now I fear for him, lest, ere he take
The state from them, they take from him his life.

Gu. If this be what thou fear'st, and since thou
seem'st

To know so much already, be assured
Less dubious is his life than that of others.

Bi. Oh heaven! are then my brothers' lives in
danger?

Gu. Tyrants are never safe.

Bi. What do I hear?

Alas!...

Gu. Think'st thou that one can wrest the state
From those possessing it, and not their lives?

Bi. My consort ... then ... seeks ... to betray ...
my blood? ...

Gu. Yes, it behoves us treacherously to spill
Their blood, ere ours they treacherously quaff:
And to the hard extremity by force
They have compell'd us. Instantly from thee
Thy husband and thy children had been taken;
Ah, thence 'twas indispensable for us
To anticipate their cruel purposes.
Myself, thou seest, to aid the enterprise
Have girt the sword, so many years disused,
To my enfeebled side.

Bi. Ferocious souls!

Dissembling hearts! I could not have believed ...

Gu. Daughter, what wouldest thou? Necessity
To this compels us. For us to retract
'Tis now too late. Put up what vows to heaven
Thou likest best: meanwhile escape from hence
Is not allowed to thee: thou'rt guarded now
By many armed warriors.—If thou art,
As thou should'st be more than aught else, a mother,
Return to thy poor children, ah return ...
But now, methinks, I hear the sacred toll
Of the lugubrious bell ... I'm not mistaken.
Oh son! ... I fly to liberty or death!

SCENE THE FOURTH.

Bianca, armed Soldiers.

Bi. Hear me . . . Oh how he flies ! and I am forced
To tarry here ! In pity let me go.
This is the only breast that, interposed,
Can staunch that sea of blood . . . Are your hard
 hearts,
Barbarians, inaccessible to pity ?—
Impious, flagitious, execrable marriage !
I ought to have foreseen that blood alone
Could finish such immeasurable hate.
Now I perceive why Raymond could not speak :
In truth thou diddest well to hide from me
Such unimaginable wickedness :
I thought thee capable of high revenge,
But never of an abject treason, never . . .
What tumult do I hear ? Oh heaven ! . . . What
 shrieks !
Methinks the earth shakes ! . . . Oh ! with what a loud
And clamorous dissonance the air rebounds ! . . .
The name of liberty, of liberty,
I hear distinctly . . .¹ Ah ! perhaps already
My brothers are no more . . . Who do I see ?
Oh heavens ! Raymond !

¹ The soldiers retire.

SCENE THE FIFTH.

Raymond, Bianca.

Bi. Wretch! what hast thou done?
Speak. Return'st thou, perfidious spouse! to me
Thy guilty dagger reeking with my blood?
Who would have ever thought thou wert a traitor!
What do I see? Alas! from thy own side
The blood spouts forth in ample streams!...

Ray. Bianca... scarcely... I... support myself.

Ah spouse...

Sustain me... Dost thou see? That blood... which
bathes

My sword,... it is... the tyrant's; but...

Bi. Alas!...

Ray. This is my own blood;... I... in my own
side...

Bi. Oh! frightful wound!...

Ray. Frightful indeed!... Myself,
With my own hand... blinded by too much rage...
Inflicted it... On Julian I fell;
And planted in him so, so many wounds,
That I... with one... at last... transfix'd myself.

Bi. Oh fatal cruelty!... Oh mortal blow!
How many of us hast thou slain at once!

Ray. I told it not to thee:... Ah pardon me:
Thee should I not have told; nor shouldest thou
Have heard of it, till it was done:... and yet,
At all events, I was constrain'd to do it.
It grieves me that to consummate the deed
My strength allows not... If it was a crime,
I come to expiate it with my blood,

Before thine eyes . . . But oh ! I hear the cry
Of liberty more fervently resound !
And I am dying here ! . . .

Bi. Oh heaven ! and . . . fell . . .

Lorenzo . . . also ? . . .

Ray. A most strict injunction
I gave to his assailant for this purpose.
I shall die unlamenting, if I leave
Safe, and in liberty, my sire, my spouse,
My children, and my fellow-citizens.

Bi. Thou leavest me to tears . . . But will I live ?
Give me thy sword . . .

Ray. Bianca . . . Oh sweet spouse . . .
Part of myself . . . remember thou'rt a mother . . .
Thou for our children should'st consent to live ;
Live for our children, . . . if thou lovest me . . .

Bi. Oh children ! . . . But the dissonance increases . .

Ray. And it approaches ; . . . and I seem to hear
Discordant cries . . . Run to the little ones,
And leave them not ; to their protection fly.—
Alas ! . . . for me . . . no hope . . . of life . . . remains . .
Thou seest . . . that . . . I am . . . a dying man . . .

Bi. What shall I do ? . . . Near whom shall I remain ? . . .

What do I hear ? . . . The cry of " Slay the traitor !"
The traitor, who ? . . .

Ray. The vanquish'd is the traitor.

SCENE THE SIXTH.

Lorenzo, Guglielmo, Bianca, Raymond, and a reinforcement of Soldiers.

Lo. Slay him !

Ray. Oh sight !

Bi. And dost thou live, my brother ?

Have pity . . .

Lo. Here the miscreant sought a refuge ;
And slunk from danger to his consort's arms.
In vain ; drag him by force.

Bi. My spouse ! . . . my children ! . . .

Ray. Thou manacled, oh father ! . . .

Gu. And thou wounded !

Lo. Oh ! what do I behold ? Thy faithless blood
Thou sheddest from thy side ! Now, who forestall'd
My arm ?

Ray. Mine ; but it err'd : this was a blow
Aim'd at thy brother's heart. But he from me
Had many more like this.

Lo. Dead is my brother ;
But I live, yes, I live ; and to kill me,
A soul unlike that of an expert,
That of a perjured, and a dastard priest,
Was needful. Salviati lifeless fell ;
And with him fell his comrades : I reserved
Thy father only, that to see thy death
Ere he gain'd his, might aggravate his pangs.

Bi. What boots this cruelty ? He languishes
Half dead . . .

Lo. And thus half dead, do I exult . . .

Bi. He hath the punishment of his offence.

Lo. What do I see ? Dost thou embrace a wretch
Stain'd with thy brother's blood ?

Bi. He is my husband . . .
And he is dying . . .

Ray. Whence dost thou beseech him ?—
See, if thy death were trusted to my power,

Whether thou wouldest live.¹

Bi. What hast thou done?

Ray. I . . . never . . . strike . . . in vain . . .

Gu. Oh son! . . .

Ray. Oh father!

Imitate me. Behold the sword.

Bi. 'Tis mine.

Lo. No, it is mine² . . . Thou murderer of my brother,

How many other deaths, oh sword, art thou
Ordain'd to give!

Ray. Consort, farewell . . . for ever . . .

Bi. And shall I live? . . .

Gu. Oh terrible sight!—Quick, quick,
Put me to death: why dost thou hesitate?

Lo. Now to thy infamous torture thou shalt go.—
Meanwhile by force from that unworthy neck
Sever the weeping lady. Time alone
Can sooth her grief.—And time alone can prove
That I'm no tyrant, and that these are traitors.

¹ He plants a sword in his heart, which he had hidden at the arrival of Lorenzo.

² He wrests the sword from the hand of Guglielmo, which, cast to him by Raymond, he had snatched up.

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